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Cover art: Jacek Dziubiński, *Black*, 2010,
acrylic and collage on canvas, 30 x 60 cm,
Sobótka (Poland), artist owned.

Editorial

As a (n art) historian I can hardly believe in coincidence. Another future (art) historian might even illuminate the fact that the previous call for papers and current cut of *Art History Supplement* had been dedicated to the paradigm of a TV documentary series on BBC public television, in relation the suspension of Greek state public television ERT in democracy in times of cultural crisis, as in our time.

This issue of *Art History Supplement* is delighted to exclusively present original contributions in the spheres of public art history, of history of art history, and an extended, but not thorough, intellectual intriguing book review as an *experimental* art history writing.

Jairo Salazar's response to our previous call for papers regarding the British TV documentary series *The Private Life of a Masterpiece* receives a distinction; for his wealthy art historical rational coverage of the show, and its connection with (art history) critical theorists, so as to conclude that the private life of a masterpiece remains private – not disclosed to the public. *The valuable attempt to make the understanding of works of art widely accessible for television audiences seems incompatible with the fact that the private life promised to be revealed in the programs does not actually offer a more inclusive study of art history, nor does it treat the pieces as mere objects with an artistic value, but rather consists of a well elaborated continuation of the traditional, hierarchical, excluding, and empowering system of categorizing artworks with the much discussed label of masterpiece.*

Kenyon Cox (October 27, 1856 – March 17, 1919) and his notion of art, and art history, is being tackled in the next paper by Marc Smith. Marc S. Smith is an Associate Professor in US history and art history. He is currently teaching

at the University of Burgundy, Dijon and is attached to the TIL research laboratory. In this paper the author presents us the history of painting of the American painter, among many others, how he had been part of cultural theories and networks of universalism, evolution, degeneration and prototypical forms of cultural relativism, and how he used his theories to justify and to impose “Classicism” against the overwhelming presence of what he called the “moderns.”

The editor

Note: Contributions to previous *Art History Supplement* CFPs are accepted anytime, since all our call for papers are mere food for thought, as ongoing research on the study of public and oral art history, and in art histories that have shaped art history, as well. Past CFPs can be found under

<http://arths.hypotheses.org/category/cfp>

More, artists are invited to submit artworks to be featured as cover page art. Send artistic contributions (jpeg or tiff, min. 300 dpi) to

editor@arths.org.uk.

Privacy, life, masterpiece. The implied art canon in BBC's *Private Life of a Masterpiece* television series

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Jairo Salazar

This article explores BBC's television series *The Private Life of a Masterpiece* looking at the relation between the subtle meanings suggested by its title and the contents conveyed to its audiences. This text argues that the title –and the series as a whole– applies a canonical language to a compilation of works whose selection criteria is, nevertheless, not fully explained throughout the series. The valuable attempt to make the understanding of works of art widely accessible for television audiences seems incompatible with the fact that the *private life* promised to be revealed in the programs does not actually offer a more inclusive study of art history, nor does it treat the pieces as mere objects with an artistic value, but rather consists of a well elaborated continuation of the traditional, hierarchical, excluding, and empowering system of categorizing artworks with the much discussed label of *masterpiece*.

In 2001, British Broadcasting Corporation, *BBC*, released a television series whose apparent promise was to unveil to its viewers some unknown but yet interesting aspects surrounding “great works of art.”¹ The title chosen for the series produced by Fulmar Television & Film helped to captivate viewers in order to meet such abovementioned expectations. *BBC's The Private Life of a Masterpiece* has reached so much attention since

¹ As described in the brief description included on BBC's website, the program offers a “series taking a fresh look at great works of art.”
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00jhpsk/episodes/guide> (accessed May 30, 2013).

its first broadcast that it has remained in the air for a decade now, completing a total of twenty-nine episodes ranging from different art periods from Italian Renaissance, Romanticism, Italian and Spanish Baroque to an extensive inclusion of artworks belonging to specific modern art movements such as Impressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, among others.² The series focuses not only on formal or iconographic characteristics of the artworks but also on some biographical facts of the artists and the contextual elements that contribute to divulge to the public eye those unseen *secrets* that are found behind the very presence of the object.

In the specific context of the United Kingdom, there has been an increasing awareness since the mid-1970s onwards to make use of media such as television to discuss in critical ways aspects concerning the visual arts. The BBC was perhaps a pioneer in producing television programs engaging with these themes with the widely acclaimed adaptation of John Berger's book *Ways of Seeing* in 1972. In addition, BBC Channel Four is currently one of the television stations which has produced and broadcasted more art documentaries over the last decade³ than many others in the western hemisphere. Offering television viewers an alternative to watch a series regarding works of art and the different kind of stories behind them is an event worth considering in terms of the public dissemination and accessibility given to a discipline as hermetic and exclusive as art history. Being a public service, it can be considered as positive and significant that a series engaging with the arts kept in the air for almost eleven years, making a topic accessible to the general public.

² For a complete guide of all episodes please visit <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0408412/> (accessed June 1, 2013). Some complete episodes are also available for online streaming in the United Kingdom -and some other countries across the globe- at BBC 2's website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00jhpsk/episodes/guide> (accessed June 10, 2013).

³ We can include on this list some of those produced series such as *Impressionism: Revenge Of The Nice* (2004); the *Full Story* series (2003-2006) consisting of three episodes engaging post-impressionist artists such as Paul Gauguin, Vincent Van Gogh, and Henri Toulouse-Lautrec; *Manet: The Man Who Invented Modern Art* (2009); *Impressionists: Painting And Revolution* (2011); and even went to produce miniseries such as the highly celebrated *The Impressionists* (2006), consisting of three episodes in which the story and development of the impressionist movement is narrated based on historical facts. More information available at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0496201/> and <http://www.moviemail.com/directors/2277> (accessed June 1, 2013).

However, the purpose of the series -briefly addressed in its website, as well as the intentional semiotics behind its title opens a debate in terms not of what the series shows but, contrary, in relation to how its contents are selected and presented and to what type of discourse the producers and broadcasters of the series want to position, disseminate, and preserve. The question then shifts from analysing what it is that the series offers and displays in each episode to the spectator, to what it is that the series *does not* consider worth displaying in a television program broadcasted to the general public.

This article aims to explore these television series not in allusion to its specific content developed through the individual episodes but for what its title proposes and suggests. It results interesting to direct the attention towards the terminology chosen for its title with the inclusion of terms such as *private*, *life*, and *masterpiece*. First, it seems as though the series, by offering a “fresh view” – as quickly described in the series website-, attempts to make widely accessible to its television viewers the analysis and understanding of relevant aspects belonging to what they consider “great” works of art. However, after a close view at the artworks chosen for the twenty-nine episodes, that valuable attempt to make the understanding of works of art widely accessible for television audiences seems incompatible with the fact that the *private life* promised to be revealed in the programs does not actually offer a more inclusive study of art history, nor does it treat the pieces as mere objects with an artistic value, but rather consists of a well elaborated continuation of the traditional, hierarchical, excluding, and empowering system of categorizing artworks as products of great male masters with the much discussed label of *masterpiece*.

Using the media of television to broadcast documentaries, miniseries, or biographies related to artworks and artists has been a common practice over the last decades. In 1972, BBC produced a series of four episodes hosted by art critic and writer John Berger. The series, titled *Ways of Seeing* adapted in an effective and dynamic manner the book Berger himself had released in the same year with a homonymous title. The

television series tried to maintain the same structure as the book but dividing it into four episodes,⁴ regarding issues majorly concerned with the female nude in art, the tradition of oil painting in European art, and the correspondences that can be coupled between art and publicity.

However, it is in the introductory episode where Berger analyses certain aspects particular to the medium of television in relation to how it modifies our experience with artworks. In this section, Berger suggests that the very existence of the artwork can be highly benefited in terms of its massive reproduction and wide accessibility. Now entire collections of museums and galleries can be displayed on a television screen. According to him, the reproduced image of a painting or a sculpture can now be seen anywhere, anytime; it can be accompanied by a text, by a montage, by another image, or by a sound; it can be zoomed in, zoomed out, cropped, reduced or increased in size.⁵ However, when the artistic object becomes an image, it can also be subjected of manipulation and an overexposure that can create a parallel, sometimes misleading interpretation of works of art.

This idea is further developed by Berger in a more critical way in the correspondent book that serves in many levels as a compliment to the television series.⁶ In a direct reference to Walter Benjamin and his foundational essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Berger focuses on the fact that despite the massive reproduction of images in the current era and the popularization of art through the use of the camera since the nineteenth century, the originality and provenance of a work of art has been detached from its original meaning, losing its primary

⁴ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*. (London, British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books. 1972). The television series is also accessible at BBC Channel Two website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00dtnvm> (accessed May 30, 2013).

⁵ Ibid, 19-20. Berger continues his argument by stating, "This is vividly illustrated by what happens when a painting is shown on a television screen. The painting enters each viewer's house. There it is surrounded by his wallpaper, his furniture, and his mementoes. It enters the atmosphere of his family. It becomes their talking point. It lends its meaning to their meaning. At the same time it enters a million other houses and, in each of them, is seen in a different context. Because of the camera, the painting now travels to the spectator, rather than the spectator to the painting. In its travels, its meaning is diversified."

⁶ Berger, 1972: 18-33.

purpose⁷ and transforming itself into a meaningless object of consume. He argues that the reproduction of artworks produces images that are manipulated to meet all kinds of expectations, but especially this constant and massive replication derives in a phenomenon he coins as *mystification*.⁸ He defines mystification in relation to all the types of attributes that audiences associate to certain artworks but that are actually product of writings, commentary, or observations made by anyone but the artist himself and that can also be related to the popularization of the art object. In that order, the phenomenon of overreacting in a mystifying way to the sense of awe produced by an object results in the attribution of terms such as *masterpiece* to an artwork or *genius* to a painter. These attributes are a response to the belief that any object produced by men has a unique quality in its production that cannot be replicated by other mechanical means and, henceforth, makes it more valuable, striking, and awe-inspiring than any mechanically-produced replica that might come after the original.

The Private Life of a Masterpiece series seems to fall into that category defined by Berger. It cannot be denied the value of this series in terms of its educational purposes. After all, it is taking a considerable number of works to narrate historical facts, assumptions, reactions, and data related to them, all in a television format of approximately 50 minutes per program with no commercial interruption. However, continuing with Berger's argument, the meaning and historical significance of these artworks included in the series is no longer there in the television screen but instead it has been modified and suited to appeal to the taste and interest of

⁷ The detachment of the art object from its original setting or context is treated by Walter Benjamin under the concept of *aura*. Benjamin suggests that with the dawn of the industrial era, the new means of mechanical reproduction generated a massive amount of images that, nonetheless, lack of *the aura*, an uncanny and unique element that is exclusive of the handmade object from which all reproductions come from. In that sense, a reproduction of Leonardo's *Monalisa* will never have the same *aura* (and henceforth the same value) as the original oil painting produced by the Italian artist. See Walter Benjamin "The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*. Edited by H. Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. (New York: Schocken, 1969).

⁸ Berger, 1972: 19.

television audiences. The purpose of the series then becomes of an informative and spectacular rather than of an educational nature.⁹

Keeping in mind that the show's title includes the term *masterpiece*, it appears as though the series has its own discourse based on opposite meanings. In other words, the series is not about art in general and the issues surrounding the conception, production, and reception of it, but instead it is concerned with something very specifically related to the renaissance ideal of the artist as a genius,¹⁰ as a *maestro*. Therefore, the series does not seem to fully achieve its democratic endeavor of giving public access to something private (data belonging to the artworks), but instead engages with an exclusive and systematically constructed category of art disguised as *masterpiece* that counts with certain unknown stories ready to be revealed for a public that, paradoxically, does not consist of an art crowd but of any individual who has access to a television set. The purpose of the series points not towards a revitalizing notion of the study of art history itself, but rather to an attempted rescue of the foundational meaning of what constitutes a great masterpiece.¹¹

Robert Nelson's essay, "The Slide Lecture, or The Work of Art "History" in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" also offers a detailed and recreated view to the pivotal thesis posted by Benjamin in 1936 in relation to the condition of art in the era of massive reproduction. In this article, Nelson considers how the everyday and currently common use of reproduced images and digital sources in large lecture rooms and art survey classes has significantly changed the study and hence the interpretation –

⁹ Ibid, 24.

¹⁰ As can be read through the canonical work of renaissance writer and chronicler Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of The Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects, from Cimabue to Our Times* written in the sixteenth Century. Interestingly enough, the similarities between *The Private Life of a Masterpiece* series and Vasari's concept of genialness are evident in relation to the interest in telling lives (which in a sense implies the unveiling of private or unknown facts) of art masters, on one hand, and of artworks (masterpieces) on the other.

¹¹ Roland Retch, "Introductory Remarks on the Notion of Universality," *Museum International* vol. 59, issue 3 (September 2007): 53.

both by art instructors and students- of works of art in the context of the classroom.

Teaching art history courses through the use of slides offers the professor the possibility of “bringing a museum” into the classroom. In this sense, the student has an experience parallel to what Berger defined as the encounter of the spectator who has access to images of art objects on a television screen. But, how is the traditional concept of the art canon altered when having almost infinite access to reproduced images of almost any type of artwork from around the world? What are the criteria to decide which works are worth of display and which not? Nowadays, the concept of the art canon seems unbalanced because, as Nelson announces in his text, with digital media instructors can decide whether they want to go strictly along with the required textbook for the art class or rather produce *their own* canon within the classroom.

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In a current context where the access to images of reproduced artworks from almost all over the world gets broader every minute,¹² the concept of a *canon* not only sounds unappealing but also quite irrelevant. Art instructors do not depend entirely on a single textbook anymore. Now they can choose from any source accessible to them that can be easily found on the web. Sometimes, many of these choices may perfectly happen arbitrarily while the lecture is taking place. For instance, a student brings to the lecture discussion a formal comparison between a work of art from the Baroque period and a contemporary piece he saw at a local museum. The lecturer can perfectly take some time off, look up the image on the web using the references given by the student, and display it for the entire classroom in a matter of seconds. This could have been almost impossible less than twenty years ago. The canon back then was a figure of authority based on and –ironically- nurtured by the lack of access and information. Consequently, the existence of an art canon seemed necessary because

¹² To illustrate this, refer to what the Google Company proposed with *Google Art Project*. Please visit “Google Art Project” <http://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/project/art-project?hl=en> (accessed May 21, 2013).

those were the sources openly available for anyone invested in the study of art history.

However, that issue of accessibility and lack of access is no longer a valid argument in this current world. Considering this, why does *The Private Life of a Masterpiece* series seem to have the urgency to preserve in a very traditional way the western art canon? Apparently, the *private life* offered to be revealed through the different episodes of the series actually evidences a very well elaborated strategy to study the artwork not by the aesthetic and artistic qualities of it, but by using the already mentioned term coined by Berger, *mystification*. In other words, the reason why these pieces have been canonically chosen to be part of the TV show goes beyond the aesthetic and artistic and touches more into the popular and the extraordinary. The more legendary the conception, creation, and reception of an art piece the more compelled and seduced the audience might feel about the artwork and the artist. Plus, simultaneously, the more motivated they will feel to possibly travel to the museum where the original is exhibited. Under this logic, Berger's concept of mystification can be decoded at its best.

According to W.J.T. Mitchell, there is an intrinsic and *fetishistic* relationship established between the picture and the viewer in a gallery or museum. But this fetishism to the object can also be paralleled to what occurs in the context of artworks made popular after broadcasting them on a television series. The term *fetishism* is here used in the sense that Mitchell uses it,¹³ thinking in terms of how we tend to give an actual existence to images and in the particular case of the series this fetishism is applied to the unknown, uncanny, hidden, mysterious, and yet interesting data of artworks that must be known by all audiences watching the show. Any reference to mastership in a work of art directly suggests an act of reverence and a ritualistic behavior¹⁴ –again, fetishism- that will be expected from the

¹³ Mitchell. 1996: 72.

¹⁴ For a deep analysis on the concept of the ritualized museum and the understanding of objects as embedded with a supernatural value when seeing as art objects, please read Carol

viewer. As soon as the TV viewer starts watching the episode on Jan Vermeer's *The Art of Painting*, or Edvard Munch's *The Scream* or Pablo Picasso's *Le Femmes d'Alger*, the viewer is persuaded to realize these are all product of genius, masculine minds that, nonetheless, despite their fame and recognition in popular culture still have a plethora of *facts* that are unknown to the majority but that will now be unveiled to you. The spectator feels now privileged: he is about to get into the privacy not of the individual master who produced the work but of the very material product of his creation.

The art object is humanized and moralized when treated as if it had a life of its own. By doing so, the artwork is understood as having a universal content that can influence or contribute to improve mankind.¹⁵ Moreover, the notion that artworks own a *life* with their own power of influence reminds us of W.J. T. Mitchell's discussion on what spectators want from and expect of pictures, and the intrinsic relationship that spectators establish with these "inanimate objects like dolls as if they were alive".¹⁶ Mitchell references theorists such as Franz Fanon and Sigmund Freud to ask himself what pictures want and what audiences expect from them, explaining this attraction between object and spectator as part of a produced desire. Referencing Fanon, Mitchell argues that the question of desire should also be discussed in relation to the viewer and –in a certain degree- to issues of race and gender.

In *The Private Life of a Masterpiece* we can consider issues related to the audience and the product offered to them to understand the basic constitution of the series' spectator. Here is a simple statistical table with some information concluded after looking at each of the 29 episodes:

Duncan, "The Art Museum As Ritual," in *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London, Routledge. 1995): 7-20

¹⁵ Retch. 2007: 56.

¹⁶ W.J.T. Mitchell, "What Do Pictures *Really* Want," *October* No. 77 (Summer 1996): 71.

TABLE 1.	
NUMBER OF EPISODES:	29
ARTWORKS FROM EUROPEAN ARTISTS:	28
ARTWORKS FROM ASIAN ARTISTS:	1
ARTWORKS FROM AMERICAN ARTISTS:	0
ARTWORKS FROM AFRICAN ARTISTS:	0
ARTWORKS FROM OCEANIC ARTISTS:	0
PAINTINGS:	26
SCULPTURES:	2
PRINTS:	1
ARCHITECTURE:	0
PHOTOGRAPHY:	0
NEW/MIXED MEDIA:	0
ARTWORKS WITH RELIGIOUS THEME:	12
ARTWORKS WITH SECULAR THEME:	17
ARTWORKS MADE BY MEN:	29
ARTWORKS MADE BY WOMEN:	0
ABSTRACT ARTWORKS:	1
NATURALISTIC ARTWORKS:	28

Table 1. A general view at some statistical facts of the series after completing 29 episodes.

It is important to bear in mind the incompleteness and partiality of this table. After all, a whole statistical study could be made looking at the nationality of the artists studied in the series, the exact subject matter chosen for each artwork, the year range for the artworks, etc. But only by looking at basic facts such as the aforementioned in the table, what do they say about the nature and discourse of the series? What seemed to be the dominant criteria for the selection process in the show? The answers to these and more questions are probably found thinking not in relation to what the producers of the series offer but mostly on thinking about a created need and expectation disseminated to a targeted audience.

Using Mitchell's method, the question then shifts to wondering what British television audiences want (or expect) from a television series about art, and –especially– what previous notions they have about that particular topic, as minimum as they might be. Looking back at the statistical table, some significant assertions can be made:

- a) **All works presented in the series are made by male artists. No female artists are included in the series.**
- b) **Twenty-eight artworks are by European artists. Only one artwork is by a non-western artist.¹⁷**
- c) **Twenty-six artworks are paintings. Two artworks are sculptures. One is a woodblock print. Mediums such as photography, new media, or mixed media are not included in the series.**
- d) **Architecture is not included in the series.**
- e) **Twelve artworks have a religious content. The remaining seventeen have either a secular or an allegorical content.**
- f) **Twenty-eight artworks are mainly naturalistic and figurative. Only one is non-figurative or abstract.¹⁸**

Now it is possible to identify in a clearer way the selection criteria used for the series and the meaning behind what the producers consider a *masterpiece* and an art audience. If there was a need to describe the series in a more straightforward way, it could be said that each episode explores aspects concerning artworks –whose media is mostly painting–, produced mostly by male artists from Europe –who also happen to be art masters–, and whose subject matter engages with a naturalistic theme where the understanding of art as an objective representation of the outside world remains present. Henceforth, this series is directed to an audience mainly

¹⁷ A woodcut print by Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai titled *The Great Wave*, included in episode fourteen, originally broadcasted in 2004.

¹⁸ Yet, this assertion is arguable, and it could be said that even Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.)* (1907) falls into the category of naturalistic painting, understanding abstraction as an artistic expression that does not represent or tries to replicate in a mimetic way the material appearance of nature.

European, consisting of men, who have a clear understanding of what a masterpiece is, with some morals and values, and who have a particular taste inclined for the medium of oil painting.

However, this straightforward and detailed description does not really illustrate what the series is about, but it actually tells more about what the series does not engage with. This description subtly but shockingly suggests that in order to treat an artwork as a masterpiece, it must be produced by men –implying that women cannot produce masterpieces or are simply not interested in doing so¹⁹; that the artwork's provenance must preferably be European; and that it has to include a moral value behind it – either of religious or allegorical nature-. Abstract works of art that do not engage with a naturalistic element of life or that are not invested in representing the outside world are not, by this principle, worth of being considered masterpieces.²⁰ And, in relation to its audience, the series suggests that women are probably not interested in watching television series or documentaries about art masterpieces, or if that were the case, that women are aware that their gender cannot produce *masterpieces* to the level and greatness of the ones considered to be part of the series.

It results necessary to think in terms of the dynamics of the television industry. The canon used for this show must meet the expectations of rating and viewership that the broadcasting company is expecting from the producers. After all, this was a television series whose airing depended in a high degree on rating and on how interesting will the

¹⁹ Linda Nochlin, "Why There Are no Great Women Artists," in *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays*. (New York: Harper and Row. 1988): 314-315.

²⁰ Art canons are always subjected to revision but, in the end, always tend to produce an incommensurable sea of categories that are more exclusive than inclusive. Read Robert S. Nelson, "The Map of Art History," *The Art Bulletin* vol. 79 no.1 (March 1997): 28-40. I also encourage the reader to consult the following texts that engage of the discussion on the systems used and the criteria applied to create an art canon. See Annitra Nettleton, "Writing Artists into History – Dumile Feni and the South African Canon," *African Arts* vol. 44 no. 1 (Spring 2011): 8-25; Roland Retch, "Introductory Remarks on the Notion of Universality," *Museum International* vol. 59, issue 3 (September 2007): 52-58. I strongly recommend Retch's article for he draws a chronological line through art history to understand what it is that makes a work of art into a universally significant creation.

program be presented. As Pierre Bourdieu states, one of the characteristics of the medium of television is the possibility of manipulating and – paradoxically- denying the existence or importance of something by showing instead something else.²¹ The challenge then, in the case of *The Private Life of a Masterpiece*, resides in how to present a series so appealing that it could awaken the interest of British audiences in general. Following Bourdieu's thesis, one of the most effective strategies used by television companies to achieve this is to expose the series under the principles of the sensational, the dramatic, and the spectacular²² so that the theme will gain a faster acceptance and popularity. Therefore, artworks within BBC's series here analyzed are treated not as common objects with certain aesthetic value but as celebrities with their own life, with their own rooted stories ready to be exposed. The dramatization of the art piece is thus achieved by attributing to the object a life of its own.

In popular culture, the private life of any celebrity represents a hidden gem that any individual not belonging to that exclusive social group desires to uncover and gain access to. In the same sense that fashion TV shows and gossip magazines offer the illusion to give public access to the life of the rich and the famous, a series as *The Private Life of a Masterpiece* persuades the TV spectator with the idea that free access will be granted to the secrets hidden in the vaults of art history for years. By making *popular* the *exclusive*, the series also represents a hit in terms of what museums and galleries can obtain as profit. More people, after watching the show, will probably want to go and see the works in person. The profit is not only cultural but mostly monetary, for the more people visiting museums the more merchandising using the reproduced image of the *masterpieces* shown in the series the museum will be able to sell.

If the purpose of the show is to make public and popular what otherwise would remain *private*, if a public television service offered by BBC

²¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Sobre la Televisión*. Translated by Thomas Kauf. (Barcelona, Anagrama. 1997): 24.

²² Ibid, 25.

wants to give a “fresh look” at some works of art, why does *The Private Life of a Masterpiece* imposes a canon based on masculinity, Europeanism, whiteness, and figurative art? Why not taking the chance of actually giving a “fresh look” at art history by taking artworks from different continents, made by both men and women, produced with media different from oil painting and sculpture, and including the possibility of treating abstract works?

It cannot be denied the value of having and using the material provided by this series within the context of an art survey. After all, the overall production and narrative of the series perfectly suits the language of television and it is certainly a very entertaining and fascinating television program. However, what this article brought to attention is the fact that this series must also be seen in a critical way to understand not only its achievements but also its omissions and the hierarchical notion of art history it apparently wants to impose. After all, these type of inconsistencies hereby described could have been perfectly avoided or, at least, justified in a more scholarly and detailed way to that general public to which they aim to unveil those unknown aspects that would help to democratize the understanding and nature of artworks.

A history of painting by Kenyon Cox

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Marc Smith

This article deals with Kenyon Cox's history of painting through many of his writings, spanning from 1895 to 1916. Kenyon Cox was a painter, muralist, art critic and art historian of the turn of the twentieth century. The goal of this article is to show the ways in which his history of painting was influenced by universalism, evolution, degeneration and prototypical forms of cultural relativism; thus revealing the transformations taking place in the social sciences. But also, how he used his theories to justify and to impose "Classicism" against the overwhelming presence of what he called the "moderns." This article will also explore the way all this came to be a comment on his time and the social transformations which were taking place.

In the United States, the turn of the century was a time of change. This was mostly due to technological innovations, growing urban centers, changing social identities and the apparition of a modern industrial consumerist society. These times also witnessed the emergence of a new mode of artistic expression called "modern," which was seen as symptomatic of these transformations. In the United States, certain artists, such as Royal Cortissoz and Frank Jewett Mather, took clear stands against the emergence of these new artistic positions and, in opposition, were most often referred to as "traditionalists" or "classicists." These artists were not "anti-moderns," but approached society's transformations in different ways. Of these "traditionalist" critics, none were so widely diffused at the time as Kenyon Cox.¹

Kenyon Cox (1856-1919) was an American painter, magazine illustrator, muralist, art critic and art historian. By the turn of the century, Cox was quite famous for his writings and his positions regarding the use and need of art in society. He developed a very personal view on what painting was supposed to be and what it should be a

¹ On these particular artists see Wayne Morgan, *Keepers of Culture: The Art Thought of Kenyon Cox, Royal Cortissoz, and Frank Jewett Mather, Jr.*, Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1989.

vehicle of, but also, on what painting had inherited from the past and what its goal for the future should be. He was clearly turned towards figurative art and thought it was his duty as an artist and prominent critic to defend his vision against the increasing importance given to abstract and representational art.

He defended his position with great vehemence. He was in no case a kind of a Don Quixote fighting against the inevitable transformations of society and its art. In fact, Kenyon Cox was a prominent protagonist in an ideological battle, which was trying to lay down the theoretical foundations for the art of the future and its use in societies to come. As such, he was in perfect sync with his time and should not be seen as a reactionary. He took clear positions on the theories of evolution, wrote reviews on prominent books such as Nordau's theory of degeneration, explained and opposed from a historical and historicized point of view the existence of both figurative and abstract painting, while developing universal and relativist theories on art. The history of painting which emerged from these positions was inspired by all the new theories which were being developed at the turn of the century.

But how did Kenyon Cox integrate these theories to his general history of painting? In what way did his history of painting help him build an argument for "classicism"? Throughout his career as an art historian and critic, how did his point of view evolve and integrate the theories that were emerging in human sciences? And consequently, how did all this reveal the specificities of his time and his particular historical subjectivity?

At a time when art historians were beginning to professionalize themselves in the United States, his ideas were disseminated throughout the United States through numerous public lectures, magazine articles and book publications. Part of his credibility came from the fact that he was an instructor at the National Academy of Design in art history and mural decoration from 1900 and 1917, and that he also taught in an irregular fashion at Columbia University from 1908 to 1914.²

² Wayne Morgan, *Kenyon Cox, 1859-1919, A Life in American Art*, Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1994, pp. 205-206.

The goal of this paper will be to show how Kenyon Cox's history of painting and general theories on art were shaped and colored by his time, his culture and his society. This will be accomplished by explaining his particular views on the history of painting through the universal general laws he believed governed art and all mankind, and also through the importance he gave to developing social sciences and the use he made of new methodological tools such as the theories of evolutionism, those of degeneration and the very beginning of cultural relativism.

As a theorist, Cox has a very clear vision of History but also of art and the position an artist needs to adopt regarding the past. He believes that in order to have a trained eye and hand, an artist needs before all a certain comprehension of the traditions of cultures which span through time and link together civilizations. In such a position, the present becomes the culmination of the past and the only way for an artist to excel in the use of his hand and of his eye, is to note the accomplishments of past geniuses and masters.³ As he explains in 1889, "No one can be said to be thoroughly educated in art who has not seen and studied the best that the world has produced."⁴ In such a view, the art of the present needs to be tied to art history. But this does not mean that Cox is a reactionary or someone who opposes all change, for the goal is not to copy the past, but to insert oneself inside the flow of its history. As such, knowledge and understanding of the past and of History become crucial for the development of art in the present and future.

Kenyon Cox is very learned and incorporates in his theories the vast knowledge emanating from the developing human sciences of his time. As an educated man, he is well versed in evolutionary theories and begins his account of the history of painting more or less from the beginning of the history of mankind, by referring to our "earlier ancestors [who] possessed tails and pointed ears,"⁵ he positions himself regarding the latest archeological discoveries of his time, linking art history to all the other human sciences.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁴ *Idem.*

⁵ Kenyon Cox, "The Illusion of Progress in the Arts," vol. 25, n°4, Fall 2004, p. 202. This text was first read before the joint meeting of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the National Institute of Arts and Letters on December 13, 1912. It was later published in 1914 in a compilation of his essays called the *Artist and Public*.

For Cox, the history of painting only began a little way down the line, with “a race of wretched cave-dwellers.”⁶ Painting and art in general are linked to the very beginning of human beings and “is as long as the history of mankind.”⁷ He pin points the beginning of painting “as early as 100,000 B.C” or “at any rate during the quaternary period.”⁸ Even if art history is linked from the beginning to the history of the human race, painting as such began with the “race of men [who] inhabited the caves of Western Europe.”⁹ He was following extensively the latest findings in archeology, but does not make any clear reference to specific archeologists or geologists or even books unfortunately. Yet, from the findings of these unknown sources, he is able to conclude that painting had from the very beginning a twin art, sculpture, which seemed to be a little older than the drawings found in caves. His second conclusion is that painting might even be older than what is believed by archeologists for “we know something of these arts as they were practiced by primitive races of men about whom we know little.”¹⁰ The art of these cavemen is described as being “purely naturalistic and imitative, with no trace of a decorative motive, or an ornamental arrangement.”¹¹ Thus painting is from the very start an art of imitation.

He then goes on to explain the different theories of archeologists. For example, that these painters drew mostly animals that they saw and hunted, and might or might not have attributed to these representations magical powers. By doing so, he links the concept of art to universal and natural traits of homo sapiens at large. Painting is seen as naturalistic and imitative, for imitation is a “deeply implanted instinct.” As a consequence, “the earliest art of all primitive people was like the earliest art we know, an art of realism.”¹² Such conclusions place his theories in a long line of Universalist thinking dating back to the beginning of the Enlightenment.

⁶ *Idem.*

⁷ Kenyon Cox, “What Is Painting?”, “Part I, Painting as an Art of Imitation,” *The Art World*, vol. 1, n° 1, October 1916, p. 29.

⁸ *Idem.*

⁹ *Idem.*

¹⁰ *Idem.*

¹¹ *Idem.*

¹² *Idem.*

The next step towards the painting of his time is the emergence of the art of ancient Egypt, around four thousand years B.C. He explains that it was an art of representation. Interestingly, for Cox, the art of ancient Egypt “differs in many ways from the art of the cave men” and “it is vastly inferior to it in its representation of life and movement.” Even if time and techniques have gotten better, the art has not. According to him, it is still important to mention it for it introduces man for the first time as the principle subject.”¹³ So, the history of painting does not seem to be one of constant evolution and better technology is not to be linked to better art.

As explained by Cox, the history of painting is better documented after ancient Egypt. There are gaps where much was destroyed, but there remains enough to have a sound idea of what happened. This allows him to develop a longer history and to talk about the general movements that take place. He explains that the general history of painting is one that “flourishes” and then “decays.”¹⁴ If one takes a step back and looks at the development of painting as a whole, Cox concludes that “in all countries and all ages, the art has been essentially the same.”¹⁵ Painting as an art adapts itself to places, societies and cultures “it has been practiced differently by different races and nations, it has varied enormously in the material employed and in the method of employing them [...] but the object has always been the same.”¹⁶ In such a vision there seems to be no clear horizontal line that one could define as advancing, placing painting on a clear progressive path. He does not perceive evolutionary theories as having a deep impact on the art of painting. In other words his vision of the history of painting is neither linear, nor evolutionist.

In the long run there are times of progress where “there has been an increasing truth of representation,” for example in the Italian Renaissance, there have also been “great epochs of art [where] there has been a high degree of truth,” and finally there have also been “times of decadence [where] there has generally been a lessening of such truth.”¹⁷ The history of painting is then one of various stages of representations

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁴ Kenyon Cox, *Illusion of Progress*, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

¹⁵ Kenyon Cox, *What Is Painting?*, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁶ *Idem.*

¹⁷ *Idem.*

of reality. Time and evolution do not allow painters to get closer and closer to a form of universal truth, it is more a seesawing process of then one of progression.

The history of painting in such a vision is grounded in the nature of man. Cox explains this by saying that painting finds “its origin [...] in the instinct of imitation” and “its most fundamental appeal [...] its most universal and necessary one – is to the sense of recognition.”¹⁸ Painting is thus both an art of imitation and an art of relation. It is a universal trait shared by all human beings and can be associated to the child’s need to imitate what he experiences and to learn by reproducing what he sees and hears. In the history of painting there is at one point a crucial step that is taken which brings the art to what he calls a point of “ripeness.”¹⁹ Once this “ripeness” is attained, it is no longer a question of evolution, but a question of artistic choices. For Cox, in Europe this “ripeness” was attained with “primitive paintings” which he defines as being an art “of the line and of pure color with little modulation and no attempt at the rendering of solid form.”²⁰ This coincides with the end of the Middle Ages, the beginning of the Renaissance. Painters then start using degrees of light, to bring about a sense of dimensions and volumes, but as soon as “true shadow” is developed, brightness and color become impossible. Then, the love of solid form slowly overcomes the line, and by the High Renaissance the line takes a second place. Light and shade are then studied for their own sake and as a consequence, deep and resonant colors come back; because of this, the line slowly vanishes. Finally, with Rembrandt, even color is subordinated to light and shade, which exists in a realm outside of true color.²¹

Cox studies this particular moment in the history of painting to explain that, once “ripeness” has been achieved, it is nothing but a constant movement of balance of gain and loss between line, solid form, color, light and shade.

According to Cox the “nearest approach to a complete art of painting were with the great Venetians,”²² but since the “balance has turned against us; our loss has been

¹⁸ *Idem.*

¹⁹ Kenyon Cox, *Illusion of Progress*, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

²⁰ *Idem.*

²¹ *Idem.*

²² *Idem.*

greater than our gain; and our art, even in its scientific aspect, is inferior to that of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.”²³ The idea that a certain kind of painting is more “complete” than another seems to insert inside of his paradigm notions of superiority and inferiority.

In his older text called *The Illusion of Progress in the Arts* Cox concludes that there is no progress whatsoever in the art of painting once “ripeness” is attained. One of his general conclusions is that “there is no one supreme master of painting, but a long succession of masters of different yet equal glory,”²⁴ which is a second tentative step towards cultural relativism. He goes a little further when explaining that “you cannot have the art without the man, and when you have the man you have the art. His time and his surroundings will color him; his art will not be at one time or place precisely what it might be at another; but at bottom the art is the man and at all times and in all countries is just as great as the man.”²⁵

This seems to be in contradiction to the previous idea, for either the art is as great as the man, and such a notion introduces a form of relativism, or a form of painting can be more complete than other, which then introduces ideas of superiority and inferiority. This paradox reveals a transformation in his theoretical approach between 1912 and 1916. And, as shown earlier, by 1916, he explains that there is a general equality between the art production of all “races and nations,”²⁶ which tends to reveal a slow mental process towards a form of cultural relativism in the broadest sense.

In order to make this apparent, it is necessary to look more onto this theoretical paradox elaborated in 1912. The idea of “ripeness” does bring a certain evolutionary dimension into the heart of his historical perspective and the fact that this “ripeness” can be lost brings hints of degeneration into his theory of 1912. If one goes further back, this becomes even more apparent.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

²⁵ *Idem.*

²⁶ Kenyon Cox, *What Is Painting?*, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

In 1895, Cox wrote a review for *Nordau's Theory of Degeneration*. At the very beginning of his review he explained:

"A painter with classical tendencies – one who admires Raphael and still respects even Gérôme – is likely to open Nordau's volume with some anticipation and enjoyment. A scientific demonstration of the mental unsoundness of the "Impressionists" and the "*Rose Croix*" appeals to him as perhaps plausible and not undesirable, and "degenerate," "hysteric," "mattoid" are beautiful names to hurl at the artists of the "Yellow Book" [...]. If it can be proved that tendencies in painting which seem to him morbid and unhealthy are really the result of disease, his cause is gained."

In this extract, it clearly appears that Cox believes in the theories of degeneration and actually believes that certain of his colleagues were touched by it. Cox saw a streak of mental imbalance in many artists, such as Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin.²⁷ But very quickly in this review, Cox is disabused and very unhappy of the scientist's conclusions "that the 'great majority of the middle and lower classes' are declared to possess all that is left of mental soundness in a decaying age."²⁸ This reveals a point of departure from evolutionary theory in Cox's intellectual conceptualization of history and would explain his later positions concerning progress and an adoption at the end of his life of a prototypical form of cultural relativism. This shows how one's history of painting is subject to theoretical transformations even if the main argument, here an attack of "modern" painters, remains constant.

By 1911, in his book *The Classic point of View*, modern painters went from being victims of degeneration to being only victims of "malady."²⁹ By 1912, modern painters were "not the mere freaks of diseased intellect that they seem but a

²⁷ Wayne Morgan, *Kenyon Cox, 1859-1919*, op. cit., p. 209.

²⁸ Kenyon Cox, "Nordau's Theory of Degeneration," "Part I., a Painter's View," *The North American Review*, vol. 160, n° 463, June 1895, p. 735.

²⁹ Kenyon Cox, *The Classic Point of View*, New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1911, p. vi.

necessary outgrowth of the condition of the age and a true prophecy.”³⁰ One thing was now clear for Cox, progress in the fine arts and in painting was but a mere illusion and one should no longer be “intimidated by the fetish of progress.”³¹ So Cox’s history of painting is clearly a way of speaking out against the “fetish of progress” that blinds people’s perception of society, but he shows this only in a limited sense.

Cox takes a clear position regarding evolution and acknowledges the horizontal progression of man through time from worse to better, but denies this to art. “Having come so far, we are sometimes inclined to forget that not every step has been an advance and to entertain an illogical confidence that each future step must carry us still further forward.”³² So he does not deny the fact, from a Spencerian point of view man and society is on an evolutionary path, but:

“As the pace of progress in science and in material things has become more and more rapid, we have come to expect a similar pace in art and letters, to imagine that the art of the future must be finer than the art of the present or than that of the past, and that the art of one decade, or even of one year, must supersede that of the preceding decade or the preceding year, as the 1913 model in automobiles supersedes the model of 1912.”³³

In an urban America, under the influence of a consumerist society, all change is often perceived as better, all change is seen as progress. What Cox is trying to do is to dissociate science and technology from art. The minor changes that occur in standardized products, from one year to another, might be seen as progress but this cannot be linked to the arts. So the “fetish of progress” is the unreasonable urge by his contemporaries to try and apply it everywhere, even to the history of painting. Theories of social evolutionism and degeneration were important for Cox, for they allowed him to judge the development of “modern” painters as a symptom of mental sickness. Kenyon Cox, Royal Cortissoz and Frank Jewett Mather represented in the

³⁰ Kenyon Cox, *The Illusion of Progress*, op. cit., p. 207.

³¹ *Idem*.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 202-203.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

United States the “classics” who opposed themselves to the “moderns.”³⁴ The art for art sake movement and the advent of these “modern” painters were to Cox symptoms of the time, just like with automobile these new art trends seemed to supersede each other with a rhythm that was unwise in the least. “It was scarce two years since we first heard of ‘Cubism’ when the ‘futurists’ were calling the ‘Cubists’ reactionary. Even the gasping critics [...] have thrown away all impedimenta of traditional standards in the desperate effort to keep up with what seems less a march than a stampede.”³⁵

Cox’s history of painting then appears to be a way of legitimizing his position regarding modern art; his theories are then arguments that he uses to attack these “modern” painters. Cox is in no way reactionary, conservative in many some ways, but he preaches an ongoing march towards the truth, which resounds throughout his history of painting and what he dislikes so much about the moderns is not their will to do things differently, but their way of placing the individual in front of society, of putting individualism in front of collectivism, their will to paint for art’s sake instead of painting for truth and society’s sake.

As society changed at the turn of the century and during the two first decades of the twentieth century, the new industrial order brought about a shift of authority from individuals and small social units to impersonal entities.³⁶ The diffusion of painting and the public for art was in constant growth. The new audience was primarily urban and from a newly formed middle-class and they mostly wanted art to be in resonance with the transformation of society. The term of Classicism came to summarize an intellectual stance made by certain painters that gave importance to creations coming from Europe since the beginning of the Renaissance period.³⁷ Any departure from this was seen as suspect for in Classicism art had a distinct mission, it was to be a universal language that unified disparate peoples and tastes in a society that needed direction and easily identifiable standards to confront the deep changes taking place in society.³⁸ For Cox, art was a social stabilizer and since times

³⁴ Wayne Morgan, *Kenyon Cox, 1859-1919*, *op. cit.*, see chapter “Classics and Moderns,” p 202-223.

³⁵ Kenyon Cox, *Illusion of Progress*, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

³⁶ Wayne Morgan, *Keepers of Culture*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

immemorial, it had helped bring people together inside a cohesive entity which was society. As such, the role of art was deeper than just truth and was a bringer of social order and social stability. Art brought “rhythm, harmony, proportion – some form of order in a word [it was] the great binder together and social organizer as well as the great educator.”³⁹ Art brought unity in the expression of human emotion if not order.⁴⁰

Inside of a society, art brought a collective experience which enriched the individual and reminded each social actor that they were all interconnected, that they were all parts of a greater body. As explained by Cox, “Under proper conditions art would always be popular, for the artist would be one of the people, having the same ideals and thoughts and feelings as the public he served, and would, quite naturally, express the mind of his public as his public would have it expressed.”⁴¹ The artist then became in some sort a social ambassador and as such represented his collectivity, thus, indirectly, the painter would bring order and harmony. Art was society, the artist was its metonymy, and in the vision of the classicists “moderns” appeared too egotistical, too individualist and posed a threat as such to social order and harmony through their chaos.

So when Cox explains through the history of painting the position of art and artists, he is actually making a comment on his own time and the theories and scientific approach he uses reveal the transformations of society, as well as a process of maturation on a more personal basis.

Even if Cox often entered conflicts and openly attacked “modern” painters, he nevertheless continued to develop a certain kind of relativism. In 1912, he published a piece entitled *Two Ways of Painting*, which was a review of John Singer Sargent’s *The Hermit*. In the course of his conclusion he explains that:

“A little while ago it was the modern or impressionistic manner that needed explanation. It was new, it was revolutionary, and it was misunderstood and disliked. A generation of critics has been busy in explaining it, a generation of artists has been busy in practicing it, and

³⁹ Kenyon Cox, “Notes,” *Nation*, n° 65, 1 July 1897, pp. 14-15.

⁴⁰ Kenyon Cox, “Tolstoy on Art,” *Nation*, n° 67, 22 September 1898, pp. 226-227.

⁴¹ Kenyon Cox, *The Classic Point of View*, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

now the balance has turned the other way around. The pressure of conformity is upon the other side and it is the older methods that need justification and explanation [...] it has become necessary to show that the small minority of artists who still follow the old roads do so, not from ignorance or stupidity or a stolid conservatism [...], but from necessity; because those roads are the only ones that can lead them where they wish to go.”⁴²

At the turn of the century, he still seems very much influenced by ideas tainted with social evolutionism and degeneration, but by 1916, his history of painting witnesses the emergence of a prototypical form of cultural relativism in social sciences. In 1911, the German anthropologist Franz Boas publishes *The Mind of Primitive Man* which will be a corner stone for the development of cultural relativism in the United States.⁴³ Boas was a professor at Columbia University at the time Cox also taught there episodically. It would be pure speculation to say that they had met, or that Cox had read any of Boas’ writing, but it is interesting none the less to note that there is a slow change in Cox’s thoughts between 1912 and 1916. As we have seen, Cox was very well versed in the social theories of his time, so whether he had read Boas, or only been influenced by the very beginnings of new cultural paradigms, the transformation of his history of painting reveal to what extent such thoughts are in fact comments on one’s own time, society, ideals and personal taste.

When he judges the productions of all “races and nations” on an equal foot, he is also taking a stance regarding Native Americans, whether he knows it or not.⁴⁴ So as a conclusion, one could say that his history of painting was a witnesses to the multiplicity and evolution of theories throughout the social sciences at the dawn of the twentieth century, but also a ideological comment on the use and position of art and the artist in society, as well as an argument for his own personal taste regarding the emergence of what was called the “moderns.” It is then possible to question to what extent histories of painting are objective analyses of art, or only social, cultural and ideological comments that are made on ones times.

⁴² Kenyon Cox, “Two Ways of Painting,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol. 7, n° 11, November 1912, p. 207.

⁴³ Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man*, New York: Macmillan, 1911.

⁴⁴ Kenyon Cox, *What Is Painting?*, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

Books received

Steven Nalder (2013) *The philosopher, the priest and the painter; A portrait of Descartes*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Timothy J. Clark (2013) *Picasso and Truth; From Cubism to Guernica*, A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 2009, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Bollingen Series XXXV: 58, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Il n'y a plus de hors-textes [Book review]

This book review – art history narrative essay in disguise – is divided into ten distinct sections, varying in size and in content. These sections are: 1) The truth is not out there, 2) In Facebook, now, we trust, 3) Communication for art history social change, 4) Art history belongs to no one, 5) The remains of a public debate, 6) Pictorial signs exist before painting, 7) The history of art history in almost a nutshell, 8) The Mellon and other lectures, 9) “It was painted as a picture,” and 10) “Si inaequalibus aequalia addas, omnia erunt inaequalia.”

Timothy J. Clark (2013) *Picasso and Truth; From Cubism to Guernica*, A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 2009, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Bollingen Series XXXV: 58, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

“We all know subcritical minds, that’s for sure!
What would critique do if it could be associated with
more, not with *less*, with *multiplication*, not
subtraction. Critical theory died away long ago; can
we become critical again, in the sense here offered
by Turing? That is, generating more ideas than we
have received, inheriting from a prestigious critical
tradition but not letting it die away, or “dropping
into quiescence” like a piano no longer struck. This
would require that all entities, including computers,
cease to be objects defined simply by their inputs
and outputs and become again things, mediating,
assembling, gathering many more folds than the
“united four.” If this were possible then we could let
the critics come ever closer to the matters of

concern we cherish, and then at last we could tell them: "Yes, please, touch them, explain them, deploy them." Then we would have gone for good beyond iconoclasm."¹

"I owe you the truth in painting and I will tell it to you"

Paul Cézanne writing to Émile Bernard;
letter dated October 23, 1905.²

I

The truth is not out there

The only truth you are going to read from me and that I am going to tell you is that I have never been to the United States of America. Anything written but the two following paragraphs can be well subjected to wild and ferocious criticism; as I propose to show the significance and momentousness in art history of this book, in various levels, but through the use of unorthodox elements and structure, over-quoting and paraphrasing; from Facebook and Victoria HF Scott to New York Times and Grace Glueck, and from Giorgio Vasari to T. J. Clark himself. Besides, such an approach may reveal the multiple faces of art history; challenging thus the use of *imagination* in art history.

I have not studied in any American institution nor university. Though, Professor of Art History Emeritus at University of Crete Nicos Hadjinikolaou, one of the professors of mine in Greece, had been teaching in UCLA, in the early to middle 1980s, indeed. More, I have never visited the Metropolitan

¹ Bruno Latour (2004) "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 30, no. 2, p. 248.

² Cezanne writing to the French artist Emile Bernard; letter dated October 23, 1905. Quoted in Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod (1987), Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, p. 2. First French edition: Jacques Derrida (1978) *La vérité en peinture*, Paris: Édition Flammarion.

Museum of Art in New York, nor the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, nor the Museum of Modern Art, neither any Smithsonian nor any Harvard Museum, for instance. Unfortunately. My only connection with the States comes mainly, apart from bibliography, from the internet one; through social media and e-mailing lists, such as H-ARTHIST.³



Moreover, the role of social media and discussion networks and mailing / diffusion lists in the realms of informal education remains to be subjected into academic exploration, as far as I am aware of in art history. Nonetheless, Twitter (www.twitter.com) has been mentioned, among many others circumstances, as platform of “shaping knowledge” in the second of two Leverhulme Re:

Enlightenment lectures by

Clifford Siskin, Henry W and Alfred A Berg Professor of English and American Literature, New York University; Director, The Re: Enlightenment Project, as Leverhulme Visiting Professor at Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), University of Cambridge, UK.⁴

³ H-ARTHIST, Humanities-Net Discussion List for Art History E-Mail-Liste für Kunstgeschichte im H-Net, <http://arthist.net>.

⁴ Clifford Siskin (May 14, 2013) *Guesswork: System, Science, and the Advancement of Knowledge*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnmwo-zCLyI&feature=youtu.be&t=19m54s>

II

In Facebook, now, we trust

Initially, the two questions originating from Facebook and which draw my attention are: What's happening into the field of art history in the USA today? What had been happening into the academic community of art history in 1980's in USA?

Facebook started in 2004 as a Harvard social-networking website but today is a global internet phenomenon. The history of Facebook (www.facebook.com) has not yet been written, as I trust;⁵ let alone the history of Facebook in art history, nor the uses of Facebook in art or in art history; neither as a way of communication, networking and results' diffusion platform, neither as a form of art. However, apart from various postgraduate, master and PhD, programs on social media (with something, or not, following their title), there is already an expanding literature examining social media in various perspectives.⁶

Nonetheless, it was through Facebook, at first instance, that I was acquainted with Victoria HF Scott and her discourse on adjunct VS tenure situation in today's USA. Her standing case after being presented, and augmented, in CAA 2013⁷ had been officially published in *Art History Supplement* e-journal.⁸ In addition, it was also recently through Facebook, once more, that I was unexpectedly acquainted with a very particular article of Grace Glueck in *New York Times*, "Clashing views reshape art history" (published December 20, 1987). Through the Facebook page of the

⁵ Sarah Phillips (Wednesday 25 July 2007) "A brief history of Facebook", *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2007/jul/25/media.newmedia> (last accessed June 02, 2013). "History of Facebook" *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Facebook (last accessed June 02, 2013).

⁶ Social media article collection, Routledge communication, <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/access/SocialMedia2013.pdf> (last accessed May 27, 2013).

⁷ Victoria H. F. Scott (European Postwar Contemporary Art Forum) (2013) "The Art History Society of the Americas (AHSa)" Session: *The Impact of Contingent Faculty: Changing Trends in Teaching and Tenure* by CAA Student and Emerging Professionals Committee, CAA 2013: 101st Annual Conference, New York, February 13–16, 2013.

⁸ Victoria H.F. Scott (2013) "The Art History Guild", *Art History Supplement*, vol. 3, no.2, <http://www.arths.org.uk/about/arths/issue32> (last accessed May 17, 2013).

publishing house once again I was informed about the publication of Clark's new book in question.

It is reasonable though that I have had this information since I am, indeed, a keen user of Facebook. Being exposed into a different – social network – paradigm, I might have had one other image of currents, and thus, sources of information.

III

Communication for art history social change

Victoria HF Scott, being educated in Vancouver, Canada and New York, USA, in short, feels, among others, that the number of art historian being represented in College Art Association (*the national professional group for art historians*) needs to be approached with care as the voice of art history might not be that strong in the terms of job opportunities and financial arrangements. The name of the network she has founded "Art History Guild" is well indicative of her network initiatives.⁹ Having a rather regular appearance on Facebook and other social media she posts and fights for the profession of art historians in USA and the rest of the world. Her poignant, caustic, cutting or even peppery comments cannot be left unnoticed from art historical discourse, in my view. Anyone should follow her activity so as to see and understand of an image of the field of art history in the USA today. Today, as newspapers were earlier but still are, *New York Times*, for example, Facebook is a public platform of "free" public expression, embodying art criticism and art history, as well. Thus, I comment on her Facebook public figure as a case study of art history of public art history; or else explained as the academic study of art history and art appreciation in

⁹ "The Art History Guild is dedicated to improving the working conditions of art historians everywhere", <http://www.facebook.com/ArtHistoryGuild/info> (last accessed May 25, 2013). One may also visit its official, up to now, website at <https://sites.google.com/site/thearthhistoryguild>. In addition, the name of *Art History Guild* should not be confused with its homonymous Visual Arts Forum, since 1976 and today's establishment since 1994, of College of Fine Arts and Communication, School of Art and Design, East Carolina University, <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cfac/soad/arhistory/guild.cfm>. Only open, though, to "any student of ECU."

non-academic contexts. I honestly do admire her courage and strength; I am also lucky to be a Facebook friend of hers.¹⁰

Nevertheless, the anxiety about the future of art history as a discipline expressed in her writings, supposing accepted at any extent by her readers, seem originating from exterior to art history motives; the economic crisis and the great numbers of job seekers out there, for instance. Victoria HF Scott, as we all are indeed, is a cultural product of her place and time; not to say just a commodity, after all. Nonetheless, her approach may also reveal, under the eye of future research, a latent internal resounding anxiety for a change in the methodology of art history. Victoria HF Scott, without not clearly stating it, expresses the need to present herself as “revisionist” or a “new voice”, at least in art historical teaching and professional business. In my point of view, Victoria HF Scott, and followers, truly represent a new voice, or a paradigm shift, in art history; but in that external direction of art history (knowledge) management studies, I could assume; taking into account her public Facebook activity.

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However, her case and her standing points, primarily against politics and practice in action of College Art Association, are certainly not something new the field of art history in America. For instance, among many others, it was more than one year ago, that “Art History Jedi” (or “Astra292”) that has appeared on YouTube; with three videos by ORGANIZE OR BE CRUSHED production, Atlanta.¹¹ Special reference should also be mentioned to her third video: *Letters to a slightly older Art History Jedi, Part III: Organize or be crushed*; where Z and Professor Lamesweater talk about the plan to improve the salaries and working conditions of art historians in the Americas;

¹⁰ According to Urban Dictionary a *Facebook friend*, among many, others may mean: 1) a friend but just on Facebook but not in real life, 2) the basic unit of popularity, 3) someone you met and know in real life, but contact is confined to Facebook for reasons other than distance. The meaning of this collation here is case no. 1. “Facebook friend” Urban Dictionary <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=facebook+friend> (last accessed June 03, 2013).

¹¹ Art History Jedi (2011) *Letters to a Young Art History Jedi* (<http://youtu.be/HyUJ2OPRdkQ>), *Letters to a Young Art History Jedi Part II Internships* (<http://youtu.be/K1rVjTHvqBY>), *Letters to a slightly older Art History Jedi, Part III: Organize or be crushed* (<http://youtu.be/SAI--5ScYrU>), (last accessed May 30, 2013).

expressing, though, a rather modernist view of not maintaining a political position: “I do not want to politicize the discipline. I just want to improve working conditions. Better working conditions mean better scholars; mean better scholarship, and more important students” (at 06:00”). Interesting as it may be the first video-part also refers, links, to the website of University Art Museums & Galleries in Virginia to which Scott was part of the team,¹² and in addition Jedi and Scott seem to have a common affection towards the writings of Michael M. Fried.

Moreover, it had not been a long ago from the public appearance of *The Art History Guild* on the art history stage that James Elkins also attempted to start an open discussion, though a question on H-ArtHist mailing list and in his personal Facebook account, on the politics of the College Art Association, being primarily interested himself in international responses.¹³ James Elkins is currently an E.C. Chadbourne Chair of art history, theory, and criticism at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Quoting from his question:

“3. Currently there is a discussion on Facebook, which includes several people who serve on CAA boards, and also an interesting comment by Nick Mirzoeff concerning the new International Association of Visual Studies

[<http://iavc.org.uk>] : <https://www.facebook.com/james.elkins1> (See the post from Feb. 11, titled "There's an interesting essay...").”¹⁴

The International Association of Visual Studies (IAVS), founded in May 2012¹⁵ is a more academically sound response to the problems and queries

¹² Team | University Art Museums & Galleries in Virginia, <https://sites.google.com/site/universityartmuseumsinvirginia/team> (last accessed May 30, 2013).

¹³ James Elkins, *Q: The politics of the College Art Association*. In: H-ArtHist, Feb 15, 2013 (accessed May 19, 2013), <http://arthist.net/archive/4700> (last accessed May 19, 2013).

¹⁴ Elkins, *Ibid*.

¹⁵ “The Association for Visual Culture will be launched officially at a conference in New York in May 2012, convened by a group of New York State-based scholars, led by Nicholas Mirzoeff (NYU).” Marquard Smith (2011 May 28) “The International Association for Visual Culture is coming...”, *Journal of Visual Culture*, <http://www.journalofvisualculture.org/2011/05/the-international-association-for-visual->

of the field; an initiative of Nicholas Mirzoeff, Professor of Media, Culture and Communication (NYU; Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development). More, IAVS is the initial joint effort of people working at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, The Institute for Modern and Contemporary Culture (University of Westminster Department of English, Linguistics and Cultural Studies), New York University, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, University of the Arts London. While its Governing Board attracts a worldwide interest.¹⁶

"The International Association for Visual Culture means to foster communication and exchange among individuals and institutions engaged in critical analyses of and interventions in visual culture. As such, it means to sponsor and support trans-national and trans-disciplinary engagements across a wide range of communities, organizations, and platforms.

*The Association seeks both to encourage inquiry and debate within the field and to advocate for the critical and theoretical expansion of visual culture studies in sites as various as the museum, the university, the artist's studio, and emergent alternatives to them."*¹⁷

[culture-is-coming%e2%80%a6/](#) (last accessed May 30, 2013). Marquard Smith writes as Founding Director of the Institute for Modern and Contemporary Culture, while Founder and Editor-in-Chief of Journal of Visual Culture.

¹⁶ Giuliana Bruno, Harvard University, Cambridge, USA; Lisa Cartwright, University of California, San Diego, USA, Graduate Forum Liaison; Inés Dussel, FLACSO, Área Educación, Argentina; Michael Ann Holly, The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, USA, President; Juliette Kristensen, Kingston University, UK; Abdellah Karroum, Morocco; Pang Laikwan, The Chinese University of Hong Kong; Mark Little, University for the Creative Arts, UK, Treasurer; Steven Melville, Bard College, USA; Nicholas Mirzoeff, New York University, USA, Deputy Director; W.J.T. Mitchell, University of Chicago, USA; Joanne Morra, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts, London, UK; Keith Moxey, Columbia University, USA; Parul Dave Mukherji, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India; Almira Ousmanova, European Humanities University, Vilnius, Lithuania; Griselda Pollock, University of Leeds, UK; Raq Media Collective, Delhi, India; Amanda du Preez, University of Pretoria, South Africa; Bisi Silva, Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos, Nigeria; Marquard Smith, University of Westminster, UK, Director; Irene Tourinho, Universidade Federal de Goiás, Goiania, Brazil; Dominic Willsdon, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, USA, 2014 Conference Convenor; Audrey Yue, University of Melbourne, Australia. *International Association of Visual Studies, Governing Board* <http://iavc.org.uk/governing-board> (last accessed May 30, 2013).

¹⁷ International Association of Visual Studies, <http://iavc.org.uk/about> (last accessed May 30, 2013).

I bring the IAVS into discussion as it is not primarily concerned with the art history labour market, as Art History Jedi or the Art History Guild, but draws attention to the re-examination of critical theory. One, of course, might not wonder why this is happening, considering the current prestigious affiliations and academic positions of its founding members. Nonetheless, it is, indeed, an association looking for “critical analyses of and interventions in visual culture.” I assume, though, that unless there had been the need, or more the awareness of such, the members of IAVS wouldn’t have been assembled into such an organization.

Equally – while Art History Jedi and Scott, for instance, were, and maybe still are, interested in the “international” and “artistic” politics of CAA, sensing the need described above as a “renewal” of an organization founded in 1911 – CAA’s current mission statement reads: “The College Art Association (CAA) promotes the visual arts and their understanding through committed practice and intellectual engagement.” Further, it has been Paul B. Jaskot, professor in the History of Art and Architecture at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois; who had been president of the CAA Board of Directors from 2008 to 2010; who supervised and validated, to the best of my knowledge, the *CAA Strategic plan, 2010 – 2015*¹⁸ – using also the following phrase as its Mission Statement: CAA: COLLEGE ART ASSOCIATION, advancing the history, interpretation, and practice of the visual arts for over a century.¹⁹

An answer to all questions, imposed by all art history change-seeking endeavours, is not to be sought out of the contexts of appearance of the latter; certainly open to future research.²⁰

¹⁸ One may download *CAA Strategic plan, 2010-2015* at <http://www.collegeart.org/pdf/strategicplan2010-2015.pdf> (last accessed May 19, 2013).

¹⁹ “Mission Statement,” *Mission, Vision, and Values Statements, About CAA*, <http://www.collegeart.org/about/mission> (last accessed May 19, 2013).

²⁰ Art Histories Society, founded in 2011, is not out of this range.

IV

Art history belongs to no one

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A criticism often related to Giorgio Vasari, and in writing his *Lives* (1550, 1568), is that he has not preserved art criticism deriving from other cultural environments, but his own. This had not been the reason, indeed, he had produced his book, anyway; as he had been writing on political grounds of Florentine superiority. It is only through examination of what was not mentioned, and why, that we could arrive to any conclusion about a larger community; about the communities that most public devotional art had been addressed to, for instance. It is true that the notion of “academic” settings or contexts cannot be genuinely applied to Vasari. Nonetheless, “academic” as a word could also be charged with the notion of the expression of an official and dominant view.

But, to be exact, what art history does? A reply indicates that:

*"It answers needs, it becomes indispensable. As an academic discipline, it never stops refining itself and producing new information: thanks to which there is of course a gain in knowledge. As an authority for the organization of museums and art exhibitions, it likewise never stops expanding its horizons: it stages gigantic gatherings of objects: thanks to which there is a gain in spectacle. Finally, this history has become the cogwheel and guarantor of an art market that never stops outbidding itself: thanks to which people make money."*²¹

According to the previous passage art history aims at the academia, at the museum professionals and at the art market. But, to whom art history really belongs? “History belongs to no one” as Pierre Nora,²² currently member of

²¹ Georges Didi-Huberman (2009) *Confronting Images, Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, translated from the French by John Goodman, University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 2. French edition: (1990) *Devant l'image: Question posée aux fins d'une histoire de l'art*, Paris : Les Editions de Minuit.

²² Undoubtedly, I owe my introduction to Pierre Nora and his oeuvre to Lia Yoka, currently, Associate professor of art history and theory, School of Architecture, Aristotle University of

the French Academy, with his edited oeuvre,²³ has supported, and the same could apply to art history as well; “Art history belongs to no one.” The same could also occur to the passage below, by adding the prefix art- to the word “history.”

“The recognition of the history of minorities and their gradual emancipation – be they societal, religious, sexual, or regional in origin – appeared at first to be powerfully liberating, a form of justice rendered to the oppressed, the downtrodden, those forgotten by history (or at least by the history taught in the state schools). It was expressed, in line with the equally new interest among historians in the more humble makers of history, by an extremely rapid expansion of the questions raised, by a fruitful expansion of viewpoints and research topics, one might almost say by a complete makeover of the discipline. Oral history, labor history, rural history, women’s history, among others – all signaled a happy future for the discipline of history. Between the 1970s and the 1990s we saw a prodigious expansion, almost a revolution, in historical consciousness and knowledge comparable only to that achieved earlier by liberal “romantic” history, followed by critical positivist history and then the Annales school. [...]”²⁴

Further, once again paraphrasing another passage of the same author, we may find the difference between art history and public art history; being hidden under the words of history and memory; art history as history and public art history as memory – aka / or *places of memory*.

Thessaloniki, and to my studies (2010–2012) in the Interuniversity Postgraduate Programme (IPP) Museology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and University of Western Macedonia, as well. Nonetheless, under no occasion can my art history apprenticeship (2006-2010) at the Department of History and Archaeology, University of Crete be overlooked either.

²³ Pierre Nora (ed.) (1984 - 1992) *Les Lieux de mémoire*, 7 vols. Paris: Gallimard. In English: Pierre Nora (ed.) (1999-2010) *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de mémoire*, trans. by Mary Seidman Trouille, 4 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

²⁴ Pierre Nora (2008) "Historical identity in trouble" *Liberté pour l'histoire*, CNRS Editions, http://www.lph-asso.fr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=152&Itemid=182&lang=en (last accessed May 24, 2013).

Public art history and art history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. Public art history is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. Art history, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Public art history is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; art history is a representation of the past. Public art history, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic-responsive to each avenue of conveyance or phenomenal screen, to every censorship or projection. Art history, because it is an intellectual / and secular production, calls for analysis and criticism. [...] Public art history takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; art history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Public art history is absolute, while art history can only conceive the relative.²⁵

.....

²⁵ “Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past.

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Art history is perpetually suspicious of public art history, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it.²⁶

What, then, could be called public art history? What is the range of its manifestations? Among them, but not limited to, one could research on “art history” people, and public figures, institutions, museums (permanent and temporary exhibitions), “public” lectures; such as the Slide, the Berenson or the Reith Lectures, for instance, or The Mellon lectures which gives me the opportunity to write this essay, libraries, archives, bestsellers, or not, fiction narratives, newspapers, magazines, e-journals, blogs, various websites, editors and authors, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, textbooks, regulatory, or legislative, texts, or treatises, diaries, travel guides, comic strips, maps, games, and souvenir - gifts and offers, stamps, songs, movies, cartoons, TV series and documentaries, art spoofs, flyers, posters, money notes, ephemera, advertisements, book and CD covers, art in fashion design and (art) museum merchandises, or any other art (history) related, tangible or intangible, *realia*. It goes without saying that the notion of public has to be defined each time, along their concept of art. Video games, for instance, have almost recently entered the art history word by their induction to the art world of Museum of Modern Art, New York. Further, as it seems fair understandable that all these research areas are already being scholarly exploited, indeed, I am less comfortable though of both the non-academic and academic awareness of the realisation that whatever can be considered as public art history, apart from being a source for (the academic study of) art history, consists a valid expression and communication of an art history; the results from the study of which, among others, will be later exploited by the history of history of art – as meta history of art this time.

Howener, art criticism, though certainly core to the nature of public art history, I feel, both as a term and as literary genre without form and structure describing content, has to treated as special category of research as it embodies all above, and many others, manifestations of public art

²⁶ “History is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it.” Nora, op. cit., p.9.

history and it can as well be revealed in the form of an artwork. Of course, the next step could be that we may have to define the notion of the artwork, and so on. Hence, in that way, public art history may not be overlooked being a deposit of various, in form, structure and in context, sources of art history; requiring, nonetheless, special mention for they are to be regarded, indeed, each time, a valid in space and timely manifestations of art history in any non-academic (as cultural) environment.

V

The remains of a public debate

While, I do understand that time comparative studies in (art) history can be extremely tricky, if not invalid, indeed; it might be worth noticing that, in the eighties in the *New York Times*, one might have had the opportunity to read that:

*"SOME CALL THEM "RADICALS," "REVISION-ists" or simply troublemakers. But to others -and to themselves - they are challenging the traditional insularity of art history. [...] They are cued by such lines of thought as structuralism, feminism and in some cases Marxism, which in art history is an attempt to relate art to class structure within the context of economic, social and political issues. They are also in touch with such disciplines as psychoanalysis, anthropology and linguistics and aware of currents from France and England. [...]"*²⁷

The names of art historians this article referred to are what one can call some of the giants of art history today. In alphabetical order: Svetlana Alpers, Timothy James Clark, Thomas Crow, Serge Guilbaut, Robert Herbert and Linda Nochlin.

Grace Glueck's article had been written in order to present a similar situation, in the States, the struggle between adjunct and tenure

²⁷ Grace Glueck (December 20, 1987) "Clashing views reshape art history" *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/12/20/arts/clashing-views-reshape-art-history.html?pagewanted=print&src=pm> (last accessed May 17, 2013).

professorship. The author presented particularly the cases of Timothy J. Clark, Thomas Crow and Serge Guilbaut [both of them PhD students of T.J. Clark], with special reference to their seminal contribution, until then, to art history; *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers of Clark*,²⁸ *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* of Crow,²⁹ and *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War* of Guilbaut.³⁰

Glueck continued, for example, stating about the fact, explaining, that T.J. Clark, being Harvard since 1980, would *take up a new post* at the University of California at Berkeley, that:

*"At Harvard, Mr. Clark has been a thorn in a few sides. A charismatic personality who is also respected as a scholar (though light-hearted colleagues refer to his students as "Clarkettes"), he is in some eyes arrogant and intolerant of others' views. His former colleague Sidney Freedberg says: "He politicized the department, and tried to diminish the interest of graduate students in attendance at courses given by teachers in a more conventional way.""*³¹

By the way, T.J. Clark would be the MA-grandfather-in-academia of V.H.F. Scott. Scott had Guilbaut as a principal supervisor during her studies at The University of British Columbia. And, in fact, both Thomas Crow and Serge Guilbaut had undertaken their PhDs under the supervision of Professor Clark.

Marvin Trachtenberg, Professor of Fine Arts, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, had written a letter to the editor of *The New York Times* as a

²⁸ Timothy J. Clark (1985) *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers*, New York: Knopf.

²⁹ Thomas E. Crow (1985) *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

³⁰ Serge Guilbaut (1983) *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press

³¹ Glueck. op. cit.

straight-forward reaction to the article and the comments on the case of Clark of Grace Glueck. This letter to the editor was published as "Trends in Art History" in January 17, 1988. In his letter, Professor Trachtenberg felt the urge to confirm the event of *T. J. Clark*, as he had been a member of the *visiting committee* of the electoral body, and explain the reasons for such a decision.

*"The issue was not T. J. Clark, but rather what appeared to be a drift of the department as a whole toward a one-sided approach to the history of art. This drift seemed to be influencing faculty appointments, dissertation subjects and graduate student admission policy. What alarmed us was not the new emphasis on "social art history," but the emphasis on one approach at the expense of all others."*³²

A more or less same critique also came from Hilton Kramer at *The New Criterion*, March 1985, but on another ground:

*"The appointment of T.J. Clark as professor of art history at Harvard University in 1980 was for some observers an event of this kind. For what it signified was a decisive shift in the way the study of art history—and most particularly, of course, the history of modern painting, which is Professor Clark's academic specialty—would henceforth be pursued as an intellectual discipline at this venerable seat of learning. [...] For those who understood what was happening to the study of art history at Harvard, the change represented by Professor Clark's appointment was seen straightaway to be no less fateful."*³³

Nevertheless, the author in *The New York Times* continued his article by stressing personal qualities of the austere and firm professional character,

³² Marvin Trachtenberg (January 17, 1988) "Trends in Art History," *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/01/17/arts/l-trends-in-art-history-183588.html?pagewanted=print&src=pm> (last accessed May, 16, 2013).

³³ Hilton Kramer (1985) "T.J. Clark and the Marxist critique of modern painting," *The New Criterion*, Volume 3, p. 1, <http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/T-J--Clark-and-the-Marxist-critique-of-modern-painting-6863> (last accessed May, 17, 2013).

as I understand, of the *clique* of "social" art historians; *who dictated a hard line ("shape up or ship out")*. Besides, this allusion of Professor Trachtenberg coincided with Glueck's view that Clark "*is in some eyes arrogant and intolerant of others' views,*"³⁴ at least from my own perspective.

Professor Trachtenberg also had named that:

*"One important department, we understood, had been completely taken over by a clique of "social" art historians, who dictated a hard line ("shape up or ship out") to faculty and students alike. As a visiting committee, we felt our responsibility was to see that Harvard did not allow its eminent art history department to follow the same path. [...] When methodology becomes ideology we are in deep trouble."*³⁵

In addition, T.J.Clark, in his own words, in some other later occasion has stressed that: *"My art history has always been reactive... In the beginning that meant that the argument was with certain modes of formalism... The enemy now is... [allowing painting to be] at any tawdry ideology's service."*³⁶

I am not implying that T.J.Clark had "refused" a tenure place at Harvard for his personal character, thus becoming the *fifth tenured professor this year to leave Harvard for another university*;³⁷ that of University of California at Berkeley. Future art historical (and) archival research might find an answer, if any, on that. Moreover, it seems rather easy, polite, and politically correct, I assume, to mix and hide personal criticism or personal interests under the veil of methodology or a greater ideological problematic or criticism.

³⁴ Glueck, op. cit.

³⁵ Trachtenberg, op. cit.

³⁶ Matthew Milliner (April 18, 2007) "An Afternoon with T.J. Clark" *millinerd.com*, <http://www.millinerd.com/2007/04/afternoon-with-tj-clark.html> (last accessed May, 17, 2013).

³⁷ Julie L. Belcove (April 29, 1987) "Prof. Clark Might Go To Berkeley," *The Harvard Crimson*, <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1987/4/29/prof-clark-might-go-to-berkeley>, (last accessed May, 17, 2013).

While, I am not fully aware of current state of research in history of art history in the USA, the nature of all “new voices” initiatives may well, then, be needed to undergo reconsideration, or fundamental revision. The question of what is or what “constitutes” a “new voice” or direction to research arises. Is it just a new kind on the block, pacing, though, under the old and “traditional” structures of methodology, while just adding (undisclosed) information to any previous art historical research? Or, should only be considered a new paradigm, methodology or direction in art history as a “new voice”? Furthermore, which were these historic mechanisms that could have been able to transform a new voice into a dominant one? Would art history gain new insights from the study of those historic, and rather, cultural and intellectual politics along with the individuals involved? Would unwritten stories be revealed? Would orality help research approach new directions by uncovering and decrypting, gestures and intonations; which could be (easier) manipulated in formal – written wor(l)d, both in art and in art history?

VI

Pictorial signs exist before painting

Orality, as a term, VS literacy, has been coined, and exploited, by Professor of Humanities in Psychiatry, Saint Louis University, and American Jesuit Father Walter Jackson Ong (1912-2003) in his book, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982).³⁸

“Ong pulls together two decades of work by himself and others on the differences between primary oral cultures, those that do not have a system of writing, and chirographic (i.e., writing) cultures to look at how the shift from an oral-based stage of consciousness to one dominated by writing and print changes the way we humans think. His approach to the subject is both synchronic in that he looks at cultures that coexist at a certain point in time, and diachronic in that he discusses the change in the West from being oral-

³⁸ Walter Jackson Ong (1982) *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.

based to chirographic [writing] which began with the appearance of script some 6,000 years ago. In addition to pinpointing fundamental differences in the thought processes of the two types of culture, he comments on the current emergence in Western society of what he calls a second orality. This second orality, dominated by electronic modes of communication (e.g., television and telephones), incorporates elements from both the chirographic mode and the orality mode which has been subordinant for some time.”³⁹

In addition, the term “orality” is certainly not the first time appearing in an art historical context. The same word has also been employed under the research of Alain Goerge, Lecturer of Islamic Art, University of Edinburgh, illustrating oral Islamic tradition in the event of *Maqamat* of al-Hariri.⁴⁰

Paraphrasing, once again, of paragraph from the work, this time, of Ong, we, as readers and viewers of art, have gained, in my opinion, a new insight in the way we perceive art.

Jacques Derrida has made the point that ‘there is no linguistic [pictorial] sign before writing [painting] (1976, p. 14). But neither is there a pictorial ‘sign’ after painting if the oral reference of the painted surface is adverted to. Though it releases unheard-of potentials of the sign, a pictorial, visual representation of a pictorial sign is not a real sign, but a ‘secondary modelling system’ (cf. Lotman 1977). Thought is nested in speech [hence, orality], not in paintings, all of which have their meanings through reference of the visible symbol to the pictorial sign of sound. What the reader [viewer] is seeing on this page [in a painting] are not real pictorial signs but coded symbols whereby a properly informed human being can evoke in his or her consciousness real signs, in actual or imagined sound. It is impossible for painting to be more than marks on a surface unless it is used by a conscious

³⁹ Art Bingham (w.d.) “Review of Walter J. Ong's Orality and Literacy,” *Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)*, Northern Illinois University http://www.engl.niu.edu/wac/ong_rvw.html (last accessed May 26, 2013).

⁴⁰ Alain George (2012) “Orality, Writing and the Image in the *Maqamat*: Arabic Illustrated Books in Context” *Art History*, no. 35, pp. 10-25.

human being as a cue to sounded pictorial signs, real or imagined, directly or indirectly.⁴¹

However, the above passage, obviously, refers to art; not to art history as field of study. How could art history encompass, if needed for research, the orality of art described, both as primary orality and secondary one?

Returning, once more, to Giorgio Vasari – as he and his work is always (and always will be) a case of research, and the rather strict linear view of his dominant, still today, art history – we could observe the inclusion of oral stories and anecdotal material his structured narrative.⁴² That way, the term of “primary orality” can be explained through the lens of writing down as “history;” what had been said and heard about any artist in question. The uses of these stories and their manipulation from Vasari are of the main concerns of art historians, considering historical imagination or fictional narrative.⁴³

Moreover, the second orality, as explained by Ong, refers to the electronic age, the orality of telephones, radio, and television, which depends on writing and print for its existence.⁴⁴ This kind of orality is of a twofold

⁴¹ “Jacques Derrida has made the point that ‘there is no linguistic sign before writing’ (1976, p. 14). But neither is there a linguistic ‘sign’ after writing if the oral reference of the written text is adverted to. Though it releases unheard-of potentials of the word, a textual, visual representation of a word is not a real word, but a ‘secondary modeling system’ (cf. Lotman 1977). Thought is nested in speech, not in texts, all of which have their meanings through reference of the visible symbol to the world of sound. What the reader is seeing on this page are not real words but coded symbols whereby a properly informed human being can evoke in his or her consciousness real words, in actual or imagined sound. It is impossible for script to be more than marks on a surface unless it is used by a conscious human being as a cue to sounded words, real or imagined, directly or indirectly.” Ong, op. cit, p.73. Lotman 1997 refers to *The Structure of the Artistic Text. Translated from the Russian by Gail Lenhoff and Ronald Vroon*, Michigan Slavic Contributions 7, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures.

⁴² For instance: Thomas Willette (2012) “Giotto’s Allegorical Painting of the Kingdom of Naples”, *Gifts in Return: Essays in Honour of Charles Dempsey*, Melinda Schlitt (ed.), Toronto: The Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies.

⁴³ For instance: Paul Barolsky (1991) *Why Mona Lisa smiles and other tales by Vasari*. University Park, PA (usa): Pennsylvania State University Press. Barolsky, Paul (2002) “What are we reading when we read Vasari?” *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 22(1), pp. 33-35.

⁴⁴ Ong, op. cit, p.2

nature, in my view. Initially, one subcategory may refer to radio programs and podcasts, referring to Giorgio Vasari and his work. For instance, in BBC radio 4, the program *In Our Time* by Melvyn Bragg had been dedicated to Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*.⁴⁵ Whereas, the second subcategory may include all various audiobooks, being produced from the various editions of the *Lives*. The cases of Naxos Company or LibriVox initiative could be reflected in this category.⁴⁶

Using Vasari and his *Vitae*, for instance, in the realms of oral art history several questions inevitably arise, concerning to us today. What can art historians do more to bridge this gap? Archival research, religious, fiction and autobiographical readings exploitation, of course, are invaluable sources of information. In the digital age we are actually part of, what can we – as art historians – do more to help future art historians to approach different views on art of today's old, modern and contemporary, western or not, art? Digital audio and video art history archives could be the option. Hence, a third one, digital orality, approaches; since scholars could have (and have) at our disposal all the "original" oral art histories almost intact, for future and further research, examination or re-evaluation.

On the other hand of this digitalization attempt of art history, Ruskin's "polemic against mechanization," or Benjamin's criticism to mechanical reproduction may need to be remembered. Edgar Wind, for instance, the first Professor of Art History at Oxford University, after referring to the moment of the opening of National Gallery of Art, Washington and the speech by President Roosevelt in 1941, he stated, though concerning on colour photographs and colour prints:

⁴⁵ Melvyn Bragg, David Ekserdjian, Martin Kemp and Evelyn Welch (2010, May 27) "Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*" *In our time*, 42 mins, BBC radio 4, http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio4/iotc/iotc_20100527-0900a.mp3 (last accessed May, 30, 2013).

⁴⁶ For example, Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Great Artists (The) (Selections)*, narrated by Neville Jason (6 CD set) http://www.naxos.com/catalogue/item.asp?item_code=NA625512, and "Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects, vol. 1" LibriVox, *accoustical liberation of books in the public domain*, <http://librivox.org/lives-of-the-most-eminant-painters-sculptors-and-architects-vol-1-by-giorgio-vasari> (last accessed May 30, 2013).

"In the field of art, this curious reversal seems to me one of the fundamental dangers of mechanization. The medium of diffusion tends to take precedence over the direct experience of the object, and in the end the object itself is sometimes conceived with this purpose in view. [...] That Picasso has consciously adjusted his palette to the crude requirements of the colour print I would not say, but his paintings suffer remarkably little in this singularly hard form of reproduction. It is not impossible that some of his raw grandeur is prized for that reason, while an artist like Braque, who reproduces less vividly because his tonality is subtler, correspondingly recedes in the general consciousness.

.....

*These mechanical transpositions are like translations, harmful only if we mistake them for the original text; but when the original is difficult, elusive or complex, we are grateful for the help of one—or preferably more than one—translation, and we grasp them eagerly when the original is out of reach."*⁴⁷

Digital orality, and oral art history, when it comes to preserving and presenting art histories, may face, indeed these "mechanical transpositions" VS "original text" discourse but, I feel, this is a price for such a shift in research.

VII

The history of art history in almost a nutshell

The changing faces of the field of art history could be traced through the study of its own products; theories and approaches as materialised in the form of books for their diffusion, for instance. Today, art history has incorporated a history of its own. History of art history is, indeed,

⁴⁷ Edgar Wind (1960, December 11) "Lecture 5: The Mechanization of Art", *Reith Lectures series 1960, Art and Anarchy*, http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio4/rla48/rla48_19601211-0900a.mp3 (last accessed June 02, 2013)

indisputably an art history examining the critical, or not, reception of artists and artefacts by certain art historians; or else *the reflexive turning of [art] history upon itself*.⁴⁸ The study of people and products (books and methodologies included) of the discipline of art history; in a historical perspective; or a critical introspective view of the discipline itself; seems necessary to understand, among others, the nature of this field of academic engagement.

This literature of research varies according to the wide spectrum across time of the needs of research conducted. Art history and collecting,⁴⁹ Art history "as history of ideas,"⁵⁰ "an academic study,"⁵¹ as "art criticism,"⁵² "as a humanistic discipline."⁵³ Art history and patronage studies,⁵⁴ "Art history and the social sciences,"⁵⁵ Art history "as class struggle,"⁵⁶ "as sexes struggle,"⁵⁷ "the natural sciences" in art history,⁵⁸ Art history "as political history,"⁵⁹ "as history of images" or "image anthropology"⁶⁰ and "as

⁴⁸ Nora, op. cit. 11.

⁴⁹ Julius [Alwin Franz Georg Andreas Ritter] von Schlosser (1908) *Die Kunst- und Wunderkammern der Spätrenaissance: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Sammelwesens*, Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann.

⁵⁰ Max Dvořák (1924) *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte*, München: R. Piper. And much later: Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor (1985) *The origins of museums: the cabinet of curiosities in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

⁵¹ Roger Eliot Fry (1933) *Art History as an Academic Study: An Inaugural Lecture delivered in the Senate House 18 October 1933*, Cambridge: The University Press.

⁵² Lionello Venturi (1936) *History of Art Criticism*, New York: E.P. Dutton.

⁵³ Erwin Panofsky (1939) 'The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline', *Meaning in the Visual Arts*:

Papers in and on Art History, New York: Anchor Books, 1955, pp. 1-25.

⁵⁴ Francis Haskell (1963) *Patrons and painters: a study in the relations between Italian art and society in the age of the Baroque*, London: Chatto & Windus.

⁵⁵ Ernst Hans Gombrich (1979) *Art History and the Social Sciences, The Romanes Lecture for 1973*, (Reprinted in *Ideals and Idols*), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁵⁶ Nicos Hadjinicolaou (1973) *Histoire de l'art et lutte des classes*, Paris: F. Maspero.

⁵⁷ Françoise d'Eaubonne (1977) *Histoire de l'art et lutte des sexes*, Paris, Editions de la différence.

⁵⁸ For instance: Martin Kemp (1990) *The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat*, New Heaven: Yale University Press.

⁵⁹ For example: Thomas C. Willette (1997) "Art History as Political History: The Image of the Spanish Viceregency in the Künstlerliteratur of the Eighteenth Century," *Mitteilungen der Carl Justi-Vereinigung*, no. 9, pp. 52-54.

⁶⁰ Hans Belting (1993) *Bild und Kult: Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*, München, C.H.Beck or Hans Belting (2001) *Bild-Anthropologie: Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft*, Munich: W. Fink.

cultural history”⁶¹ are just a few prominent examples of images of the core essence of art history produced that history of art history, as meta-history of art, would wish to illuminate. Let alone all (anthropological) shifts towards visual culture and visual studies.⁶² Nevertheless, something can die only if it is born and something cannot end unless it has started.

There are already books that have been published genuinely leaning towards that direction, of meta-history of art, indeed.⁶³ However, a recently published reference book, in the form of dictionary, in German, under the supervision of Ulrike Wendland, *Biographisches Handbuch deutschsprachiger Kunsthistoriker im Exil Leben und Werk der unter dem Nationalsozialismus verfolgten und vertriebenen Wissenschaftler* [Biographical Guide to German-Speaking Art Historians in Exile Life and Work of Scholars persecuted and exiled under the National Socialist régime] may have set a valid discussion for what history of art history could be; illustrating the lives (plus bibliography) of 250 German art historians.⁶⁴ A similar concept can be encountered at the American free online *Dictionary of Art Historians*.⁶⁵ While, in France, the Institut national d’histoire de l’art (INHA) has launched its own, ongoing since 2009, *Dictionnaire critique des*

⁶¹ Richard Woodfield (2001) *Art history as cultural history: Warburg's projects*, Amsterdam: G+B Arts International.

⁶² For instance: Whitney Davis (2010) *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, London: Princeton University Press.

⁶³ For example: Udo Kultermann (1981) *Geschichte der Kunstgeschichte*, Frankfurt am Main/Berlin, Wien: Ullstein Verlag. George Bazin (1986) *Histoire de l’histoire de l’art, de Vasari à nos jours*, Paris: Albin Michel. Donald Preziosi (1989) *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press. Eric Fernie (ed.) (1995) *Art history and its methods: a critical anthology*, London: Phaidon Press Ltd. Donald Preziosi (ed.) (1998) *The art of art history: A Critical Anthology (Oxford History of Art)*, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press. Martin Kemp (ed.) (2000) *The Oxford History of Western Art*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Richard Shone and John-Paul Stonard (2013) *The Books that Shaped Art History: From Gombrich and Greenberg to Alpers and Krauss*, London: Thames & Hudson.

⁶⁴ Ulrike Wendland (1999, 2011) *Biographisches Handbuch deutschsprachiger Kunsthistoriker im Exil Leben und Werk der unter dem Nationalsozialismus verfolgten und vertriebenen Wissenschaftler, Teil 1: A–K. Teil 2: L–Z*, Berlin: de Gruyter Saur.

⁶⁵ *Dictionary of Art Historians*; A Biographical Dictionary of Historic Scholars, Museum Professionals and Academic Historians of Art; In Association with the Department of Art, Art History and Visual Studies, Duke University, <http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/> (last assessed June 05, 2013).

historiens de l'art actifs en France de la Révolution à la Première Guerre mondiale [A critical dictionary of active art historians in France from the Revolution to the First World War].⁶⁶ All these reference databases – whether online or in print – will constitute invaluable sources for the future historian of art history.

More, the studies and the research of Professor in Global Art & Design Studies, Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton, Jonathan Harris in the *New Art History*⁶⁷ and, also currently, Associate Professor in Culture, Film and Media, Faculty of Arts, School of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies, University of Nottingham Paul Gladston in his western notion of *disciplinary art history*,⁶⁸ along with a conference named *After the New Art History*, organized – in conjunction with the online *Journal of Art Historiography* (<http://arthistoriography.wordpress.com>) – by Professor Matthew Rampley, School of Languages, Cultures, Art History and Music, Department of Art History, Film and Visual Studies University of Birmingham cannot be overlooked.

I am quoting from the latter call for papers, for its meta-art-historical character:

“The term 'new art history' has long been an established (although contentious) part of the critical lexicon of the art historical discipline. Associated with the pioneering social and feminist art histories of T J Clark and Griselda Pollock of the 1970s (expanding in subsequent decades to encompass post-colonial, Freudian, post-Freudian and wider gender-studies approaches), it denoted a conceptual shift that foregrounded the dependence of intellectual inquiry on a priori ideological / political values.

⁶⁶ Philippe Sénéchal, Claire Barbillon, dir. (2009), *Dictionnaire critique des historiens de l'art actifs en France de la Révolution à la Première Guerre mondiale*, Paris, site web de l'INHA, [En ligne] <http://www.inha.fr/spip.php?rubrique347>, consulté le 05/06/2013.

⁶⁷ Jonathan Harris (2001) *The New Art History: A Critical Introduction*, London: Routledge.

⁶⁸ Paul Gladston (2004) *Art History After Deconstruction: Is There Any Future For a Deconstructive Attention to Art Historical Discourse?* (PhD thesis), Nottingham: The University of Nottingham.

In recent years such interlinking has been undermined in a number of ways. Embryonic discourses such as neuro-art history, environmental approaches to art and neo-Darwinian accounts have sought to create alternative 'objective,' 'scientific' and depoliticised paradigms of inquiry. On the other hand, it has been seen as insufficiently self-critical; for many proponents of visual studies its institutional success has led to a blunted vision, in which the value of basic categories, such as 'art' allegedly remain uninterrogated.

Finally, growing external political pressures on the Academy, which have been focused on instrumentalising art history, are potentially threatening to turn the discipline into a service industry for the market, stripping it of its force as a mode of radical social, aesthetic and cultural inquiry.”⁶⁹

However, accepting this *reflexive turning upon itself*, suggested by meta-history of art, would that mean that all histories and theories proposed anew do not derive from some previous scholarship which cannot offer sustainable answers to existing problems? Isn't there an “innate” quality of self-understanding in research so as to adjust paradigms? More, why would we need a different term to describe research on the people of art history; since methodological approaches remain intact? The last question may also well apply to both public art history and oral art history. Would just a shift in research interests – or in the object of art history – be sufficient to suggest a shift in paradigm? At a certain extent though it goes without saying that in order for a new research area to be revealed in academia the idea of, at least, one's world has to adjust.

More, there is a latent interest in the history of art history at least since the 1950s'. Art and architecture historian Sir Nikolaus Bernhard Leon Pevsner CBE FBA in the BBC radio 4 Reith Lectures⁷⁰ series “The Englishness of English Art” stated:

⁶⁹ Matthew Rampley, *CFP: After the New Art History (Birmingham, 26-27 Mar 2012)*. In: *H-ArtHist*, Sep 14, 2011 (accessed May 28, 2013), <http://arthist.net/archive/1837>, (last accessed May 28, 2013).

⁷⁰ “The Reith Lectures were inaugurated in 1948 by the BBC to mark the historic contribution made to public service broadcasting by Sir John (later Lord) Reith, the corporation's first

*"Art historians differ in their personal preferences. The artist tends to look at the individual work for its aesthetic character and its craftsmanship regardless of its historical setting; the connoisseur for its handwriting and its genuineness, regardless of its historical setting; the biographer is interested ultimately not in the individual work, but in the man behind it. His question is: How did this unique individual express himself by means of his art? The historian need not underestimate the individual, but he tends to neglect the individual. He is more fascinated by what men and works of one age have in common, and he watches how one age develops into another. He says that the spirits of ages as he watches them are greater than the individual. He is the generaliser—and I may just as well make it clear at once that I am one of them."*⁷¹

Furthermore, in the same Lecture, Pevsner continued with a self-meta-art-historical-in-approach comment; the following reflexive turning upon himself "reads" as:

"That brings me to a few personal remarks which I think I ought to add in conclusion.

Why should I give this particular series of lectures to you? Why should I, with a never fully conquered foreign intonation, I who am not too certain of the difference between a centre forward and a leg volley, stand here to talk to you about the Englishness of

English art? My defence is that in order to see clearly what is what in national character it is perhaps a good thing at one stage to have come in

director-general. John Reith maintained that broadcasting should be a public service which enriches the intellectual and cultural life of the nation. It is in this spirit that the BBC each year invites a leading figure to deliver a series of lectures on radio. The aim is to advance public understanding and debate about significant issues of contemporary interest." BBC radio 4, *About The Reith Lectures*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00729d9/features/about> (last accessed June 02, 2013).

⁷¹ Nikolaus Pevsner (1955, October 16) "Lecture 1: The Geography of Art" *Reith Lectures 1955: The Englishness of English Art*, 02:40", http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio4/rla48/rla48_19551016-0900b.mp3 (last accessed June 02, 2013).

from outside and then to have settled down to become part of it. It is a curious experience, I can assure you, but one worth undergoing. In my own field of research I came from the German

Baroque of Saxony at its most exuberant, and had then done some years' work on

Italian Baroque painting, before—in 1930—I first visited England. It was a discovery.

Few people on the Continent knew about English art then or had studied it. I was able to travel a good deal and started teaching the history of English art. In connection with that I began collecting material on this problem of Englishness. The material grew slowly at first, and much faster when I left Germany and settled in London. By 1941 or 1942, for a course of lectures at Birkbeck College, all this collected material had to take some shape.

Immediately after the war I went back to it and this time with a view to making a book of it.”⁷²

A question examining the *Britishness of British history of art*, thus, could arise through such a consideration. And, it is further interesting that both the two above passages are omitted from the official publication based on these lectures.⁷³ In addition, the same realm of self-reflective thought of “*Why should I give this particular series of lectures to you?*” could be traced in the lecture of French writer born in Algeria Zahia Rahmani (Institut national d’histoire de l’art), “*Why an Art and Globalization Research Program at INHA ? And why me ?*” during *Global Art History and the Peripheries* conference (June 14, 2013), organized by the Artl@s Project - École normale supérieure, Terra Foundation for American Art, Institut national d’histoire de l’art.⁷⁴

⁷² Pevsner, op.cit, 24:28”

⁷³ Nikolaus Pevsner (1956) *The Englishness of English Art: an expanded and annotated version of the REITH LECTURES broadcast in October and November 1955*, New York: Frederick Praeger.

⁷⁴ <http://www.artlas.ens.fr/seminaire-et-colloques/rencontres-scientifiques/global-art-history-and-the/article/program-of-the-conference?lang=fr> (last access June 20, 2013)

VIII

The A.W. Mellon and other lectures

The Andrew William Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts *were established in 1949 to bring to the people of the United States the results of the best contemporary thought and scholarship bearing upon the subject of the fine arts.*⁷⁵ Several books that are, or could have been, mentioned earlier had been the product of these lectures series.

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More, in the realms of oral art history, one can listen – and actually download for one's own digital and oral art history archive – the lectures in question from the website of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. The same institution also accommodates an Oral History Program, since 1987, in *an effort to preserve its historical record.*⁷⁶ Another similar research program of oral histories to draw attention in art (historical) context, for example, is that of *Oral History in the Visual Arts*; a research collaboration between Wimbledon College of Art part of University of the Arts, London and Victoria and Albert Museum.⁷⁷ There is also an organization called *Oral History Archives of Japanese Art.*⁷⁸ While, the Archives of American Art,

⁷⁵ A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/audio-video/mellon.html> (last accessed May 20, 2013).

⁷⁶ Oral History, Gallery Archives, <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/research/gallery-archives/oral-history.html> (last accessed May 23, 2013).

⁷⁷ Oral History in the Visual Arts, <http://www.wimbledon.arts.ac.uk/ccwgraduateschool/projects/collaborations/networks/oral-history-in-the-visual-arts/> (last accessed May 30, 2013).

⁷⁸ "The Oral History Archives of Japanese Art is an organization that is devoted to conducting interviews with individuals involved in the field of art, and collecting and preserving the results as historical documents. The term "oral history" refers both to a record of a speaker's personal memories, and to the research that deals with these documents as scholarly subjects. To create an oral history of Japanese art, we conduct interviews not only with artists but also with a wide range of other individuals associated with Japanese art including critics, curators, gallerists, editors, and administrative officials. It is our goal to record detailed interviews dealing with everything from the speaker's upbringing to their current activities, collect transcripts of these accounts, and in making them available publicly, make a positive contribution to further research." *Overview of the Oral History Archives of Japanese Art*, http://www.oralarthistory.org/about/index_en.php (last accessed May 30, 2013).

Smithsonian Institution have their own oral history program *Interviews*, since 1958.⁷⁹ None of the above programs, though, refer to oral art history.

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Further, it is through oral art history – as a practice, not as academic engagement – that art history teaching is taking place, either in a classroom, either in an auditorium or in one's living or bed room. Moreover, would a written text in a book produced by lectures be any different, indeed, from the original delivery or recording; apart from the inclusion of, end- or, footnotes? An answer to this rhetoric question could be discussed on the grounds of level and perspective of research conducted.

Nevertheless, it is, certainly, a fact that Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel had never published anything on *Aesthetics* himself in his life time. His *Lectures on Aesthetics* (in German *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*) had been compiled in Berlin from 1835 to 1838 (and with revisions in 1842), based on Hegel's own hand-written notes and notes from his students during his lectures; Heidelberg in 1818 and in Berlin in 1820/21, 1823, 1826 and 1828/29.⁸⁰

Furthermore, I was wondering that, and as far as I am aware, since the painter and art theorist Paolo Lomazzo had been blind later in his life (1571), then, how he did write his two seminal treatises, for instance. Andrea Bayer referred, though, to "encroaching blindness."⁸¹ I am referring to Giovanni

⁷⁹ Liza Kirwin (2008) *Speaking of Art: Selections from the Archives of American Art Oral History Collection*, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution: Winterhouse Editions with the support of the Dedalus Foundation, Inc. There is also an online edition http://www.aaa.si.edu/files/publications/Speaking-of-Art_Selection-from-the-Archives-of-American-Art-Oral-History-Collection.pdf (last accessed May 30, 2013).

⁸⁰ For example: G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T.M. Knox (1975) 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press. German editions of transcripts of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics: *Vorlesung über Ästhetik. Berlin 1820/21. Eine Nachschrift*, ed. H. Schneider (1995) Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst*, ed. A. Gethmann-Siefert (2003) Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag. *Philosophie der Kunst oder Ästhetik. Nach Hegel. Im Sommer 1826. Mitschrift Friedrich Carl Hermann Victor von Kehler*, eds. A. Gethmann-Siefert and B. Collenberg-Plotnikov (2004) Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag. *Philosophie der Kunst. Vorlesung von 1826*, eds. A. Gethmann-Siefert, J.-I. Kwon and K. Berr (2004) Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.

⁸¹ Andrea Bayer (2004) "Defining Naturalism in Lombard Painting", *Painters of reality: the legacy of Leonardo and Caravaggio in Lombardy*, edited by Andrea Bayer ; with contributions by Mina Gregori, Martin Kemp ... [et al.], catalogue of the exhibition "Painters

Paolo Lomazzo's *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura et architettura* (1584) and *Idea del tempio della pittura* (1590). Could he have been using a scribe assistant? Who was he or her? What was this person's name? Was the latter a professional one, a member of publishing house? Paolo Gottardo Pontio or Pietro Tini, maybe? Or, a painter apprentice of his? Giovanni Ambrogio Figino, maybe? There should have been sometime manuscripts of these works before going to print. Undoubtedly, future archival research and / or comparative textual narrative analysis may shed light on this practice of primary orality – if not already been disclosed.

And, if that is a case, indeed, while a pictorial sign exists before being painted; equally, art history exists before being written down; or published; in the realms of oral art history.

IX

"It was painted as a picture"⁸²

Picasso and Truth; From Cubism to Guernica is the outcome product of collaboration of A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts in the National Gallery of Art with T. J. Clark, as the fifty-eighth invited speaker. Previous honorary guests include (in alphabetical order): Anthony Blunt, Kenneth Clark, Arthur Danto, E. H. Gombrich, Nikolaus Pevsner, Salvatore Settis and recently Michael Fried⁸³ investigating *the internal structure of the pictorial act*. In addition, Elizabeth Cropper, dean of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. has written a vivid introduction in a volume celebrating the first fifty years of these

of Reality: The Legacy of Leonardo and Caravaggio in Lombardy," Museo Civico "Ala Ponzzone," Cremona, February 14 - May 2, 2004, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, May 27 - August 15, 2004, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Press, p. 16.

<http://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15324coll10/id/96665/rec/29> (last accessed June 03, 2013).

⁸² Pablo Picasso quoted in T. J. Clark (2009, April 5) *Lecture 3 Window, The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*, 03:26" , <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/audio-video/audio/mellon-clark3.html> (last accessed June 03, 2013).

⁸³ Michael Fried (2010) *The Moment of Caravaggio, The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

lectures series.⁸⁴ (For a list of Mellon lectures, 1952-2013, see the last three printed pages of the book). Cropper had also been the one to invite Professor Clark in the Mellon lectures series (p. 286).

T. J. Clark is, currently, a George C. and Helen N. Pardee Professor of Art History Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley. He has also been the author of, among many significant (and seminal) others, *The Sight of Death*, and *Farewell to an Idea*, and the co-author (with “Retort”) of *Afflicted Powers*.

The book, in question, is weaved into chapters corresponding to the six Mellon lectures Picasso painting series: Lecture 1 Object, Lecture 2 Room, Lecture 3 Window, Lecture 4 Monster, Lecture 5, Monument, Lecture 6 Mural; being fore-headed by an introduction and then followed by acknowledgments, (end-) notes and index. The paintings used, paradigmatically chosen, for his argument are *Blue Room* (1901), *Guitar and Mandolin on a Table* (1924), *Three Dancers* (1925), *Painter and Model* (1927), *Guernica* (1937).

With his new book, Professor Clark encourages readers to look anew an internal to external to art work (and thus world). Previous stages of research could suggest an external to internal one; when the study of extra-pictorial (cultural, economic and gender) constructions and ideas had been of primary importance and sought to be found in painting. NO, this is not a connoisseur or a modernist reading or art for art’s shake. It is a close pictorial reading through detailed and painstaking descriptions of pictorial elements elusively combined with primary sources. Lavishly illustrated, both in terms of artworks and photographic archival material his narrative becomes easier to follow, considering the elegant descriptions of colour and structure elements in Picasso’s work.

⁸⁴ Judy Metro and Carol Eron (eds.) (2002) *The A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, Fifty Years*, Washington, DC, New Heaven: National Gallery of Art, Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts and Yale University Press.

Based on archival research and sources – primarily Picasso’s writings and correspondence – and their close critical reading, Clark attempted to produce a clear view – out of previous, connoisseurship, art or / and scholarly criticism – on the work of the Modern Master. It is only through a thoroughly narrow examination and reading of Picasso’s painting structural elements along with exploitation of Picasso’s archive that the painter’s *Truth* arises. However, in his attempt to investigate Picasso’s archetypes of imagination – thus pictorial signs, in our case, or pre-images – Professor Clark might seem to walk near the shifting boundaries of speculation and verity. For instance, he has noted in *Guernica* on the form of fallen warrior or the dialogue of hero and horse that Picasso would have *clearly* seen Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres’s *Romulus Victorious over Acron* (1812, oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris) and Jacques-Louis David’s *Intervention of the Sabine Women* (1799, oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris) - especially, “since we know by now that Ingres usually appears in Picasso when sexuality is in question” (p. 262).

More, Professor Clark is producing a mere “pictorially compatible” methodology, as pictorial structuralism, to approach 20th century art history; seeking *Truth not The Truth*. While, Wittgenstein and Nietzsche meet inside the work of Picasso; even though the painter himself had probably no idea of that happening in the 1920’s or latter. Wittgenstein’s concept of object of art could be regarded as “the craving for simplicity,”⁸⁵ In addition, Nietzsche’s notion of *truth* could be paraphrased, here, in the realms of painting, as a mobile army of colour metaphors, iconographic metonyms, and pictorial anthropomorphisms,⁸⁶ while primarily “‘truth’ is nothing more

⁸⁵ Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett (1966) Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p.36. Quoted from: Hagberg, Garry, "Wittgenstein's Aesthetics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/wittgenstein-aesthetics>, (last accessed May 30, 2013).

⁸⁶ For Nietzsche truth is “a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms.” Quoted from: Robert Wicks, "Friedrich Nietzsche", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/nietzsche> (last accessed May 30, 2013).

than the invention of fixed conventions for merely practical purposes, especially those of repose, security and consistence.”⁸⁷

In order to clarify such an approach, and create of starting point for his lectures, Professor Clark also asked the question of what made Picasso truly the artist of the century. His answer summarises both his lectures and his method. *“What makes Picasso truly the artist of the century, in other words, is his absolute faith in the here and now of pleasure and sex and the painter’s craft, and his absolute lucidity about the circumstance in which these things were now on offer. The room remained, but it was more and more populated by monsters”* (p. 21).

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X

“Si inaequalibus aequalia addas, omnia erunt inaequalia”

The above quotation from Francis Bacon’s work reads that *“If you add like to unlike, you will always end up with unlike.”⁸⁸* This axiom gives me the opportunity to reflect that there can be no valid criticism without abiding to a common paradigm and a certain context; otherwise a rule or a law of paradigm transposition or contextual translation would need to be formed. The recurring theme of context, and its plurality, in this essay is also illustrated in its title. Its title *“Il n’y a plus de hors-textes”* is, of course, an allusion, in plural, to the notoriously widely quoted phrase *“il n’y a pas de hors-texte”* (*“There is nothing outside context”*) of Jacques Derrida, in his *De la grammatologie* (1967).⁸⁹ Its use had been intended to illustrate emphasizing the very fact of different art history intellectual contexts existing simultaneously and their level of engagement; and, in addition, to

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Quoted from Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno (2002) *Dialectic of Enlightenment; Philosophical Fragments*, Edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, translated by Edmund Jephcott, Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 4. German edition: (1947) *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente*, Amsterdam: Querido.

⁸⁹ Jacques Derrida, (1967) *De la grammatologie*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, p. 227. In English: Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, corrected edition, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1997), Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 158. The first English translation appeared in 1976 under the same American university publication house.

elucidate that Clark with his new book illuminates an art history starting from the inside (reality) of the work of art to its outside (world – and intellectual –) contexts, in the time of its production.

However, as, in both mathematics and some linguistics, “two negatives equal a positive,” the phrase “il n’y a plus de hors-textes” could be freely translated, in public art history as “there are more than one – the academic – cultural environments that embody art history,” in oral art history as “there are more than one ways to produce and preserve art history” and in meta-history of art, as “there are many reasons why an art historian has made this interpretation,” for instance. While in art history, as Professor Clark supported and explained, in his Mellon lectures series and, hence, in his new book, that “*Truth* is to be sought inside the pictorial space of a painting” or, better, “There are no more places to look for *Truth* than inside the painting itself.”

Nonetheless, considering the title of this last section and in the non-existence of a law of paradigm transposition in art history, this book review essay is hence scarcely valid; since extra-pictorial (as textual) narrative elements are to be considered of equal importance in the examination and in the approach of an artwork or artist. Whereas the *archive* [archival material] where a certain *truth* could exist should be critically investigated for even the context of the archive itself should also be under examination. Furthermore, the illustration of inner-pictorial narrative elements along with the illumination of someone’s words is once more a partial interpretation, for this time it is through the filter of the artist oneself, and thus we still have no clear view of one’s work; supposing that we could ever have such one. Yet, Professor Clark’s new book on Picasso could intriguingly, turning upon itself, be described as in his own words for *the Picasso literature: It is like a set of gargoyles erected to keep an evil spirit at bay* (p. 5).

Call for papers

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Deadline August 15, 2013

Horace, *Odes*, 3.30.1-9

"I have built a monument more enduring than bronze and higher than the pyramids' regal structure, that neither the biting rain nor the strong north wind can destroy, nor even the numberless passing of the years, nor the flight of ages. I shall not completely die and a large part of me will cheat the goddess of death. Even as the High Priest with the silent Vestal virgin ascends the Capitol, I will shine forth, by praise made new, for all posterity."

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine names*, 704a-704b

"For beauty is the cause of harmony, of sympathy, of community. Beauty unites all things and is the source of all things. [...] The Beautiful is therefore the same as Good, for everything looks to the Beautiful and the Good as the same of being, and there is nothing in the world without a share of the Beautiful and the Good."

Shakespeare, "Sonnet 55"

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone besmear'd with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.

'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön*

"I should prefer that only those be called works of art in which the artist had occasion to show himself as such and in which beauty was his first and

ultimate aim. None of the others, which betray too obvious traces of religious conventions, deserves this name because in their case the artist did not create for art's sake [*weil die Kunst hier nicht um ihren selbst willen gearbeitet*, literally "because here art did not work for its own sake"], but his art was merely a handmaid of religion, which stressed meaning more than beauty in the material subjects it allotted to art for execution." (1984, pp. 15, 17)

Jacques Prévert, "The great man"

In a stonemason / where I met him / he was taking his measures / for posterity.

Among many others, the above poetical investigations on the nature of time, beauty and truth have been widely critically discussed by historians of classical, medieval, early modern and modern literature; while these loci have been even more exploited by artists and authors of verse and prose, for instance. But what could we gain from an art historical (perspective –) reading? In addition, a history of "paragone" could be well traced long back in art history time and space. Through historiography or specific case study, aspects of any artistic, personal, scientific, literary, social, economic, visual, cultural, material, among others, art historical *paragone* will be strongly appreciated for publication in the next issue of *Art History Supplement*.

Further, another proposed theme, but not limited to, may focus on research on art, on the boundaries between aesthetics or philosophy of art, sociology of art, science of art, theory of art, anthropology of art and history of art or manifestations of art history, which could challenge a holistic approach to art and its history.

For more information, refer to authors' guidelines.

Note: Contributions to previous *Art History Supplement* CFPs are accepted anytime, since all our call for papers are mere food for thought; as ongoing research on the study of public and oral art history, and in art histories that have shaped art history, as well. Past CFPs can be found under <http://arths.hypotheses.org/category/cfp>

More, artists are invited to submit artworks to be featured as cover art. Forward artistic contributions (jpeg or tiff, min. 300 dpi) to editor@arths.org.uk

